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Borderland of music and psychology

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# THE BORDERLAND OF MUSIC AND PSYCHOLOGY

BY  
FRANK HOWES  
M.A. (Oxon.)

WITH A PREFACE BY  
SIR HUGH ALLEN  
*Director of the Royal College of Music*

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## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

I HAVE to make grateful acknowledgments to the following: to Mr. H. C. Colles, of *The Times*, and to Mr. W. A. Pickard-Cambridge, of Worcester College, Oxford, for helpful criticism ; to the proprietors of *The American Journal of Psychology* for kind permission to quote extensively from that Journal; to the editors of *Music and Letters* and *The Musical Times* for permission to reprint matter which has already appeared in their pages ; to Dr. William Brown, Wilde Reader in Mental Philosophy in Oxford University, for kindly reading the first essay, which was written as an experiment in the application of psychology to musical phenomena, and to the late Arthur Clutton-Brock, who just before he died performed the same service for me. His criticism is so interesting and so characteristic of his thought that I should like to quote from his posthumous letter :

## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

“ . . . but I must say that I don’t think either you or Abercrombie or I or anyone else I know of, has yet managed to state quite convincingly the fact that communication or ‘ address ’ is an essential part of an art. I am not at all satisfied with anything I have said about it nor are my thoughts yet clear. There is a gap or a fog somewhere. Yet I am also clear that it is the deficit in Croce’s aesthetic. I also think the point about the super—as against the sub-conscious—wants a great deal of working out, and is of enormous and practical importance. I have merely stated the distinction; I’ve done little to elucidate it. But the super-conscious achieved in the main through this fellowship as opposed to herd, is the aim of life. (See the New Testament *passim*).”

Finally, I owe the original idea of the book to one with whom I have had the good fortune to be associated at different times in such different capacities, as a fellow-amateur, as a pupil, as a critic even, and always as a friend. I therefore dedicate this book to him who by a word became its true father, Adrian Boult. F.H.

# PREFACE

BY  
SIR HUGH ALLEN

MR. HOWES is well qualified to write on the subject he has chosen, for his upbringing has given him a wide experience in this kind of enquiry. At Oxford the philosophical training of Greats, and subsequently much practical experience in music itself, have made him an exponent of his theme, interesting and stimulating to read.

He deals with a subject about which there is much diversity of opinion and considerable controversy. He brings new light to bear upon old problems and a sane attitude towards some of the newer ones which have arisen in the awakened interest in musical education during the past twenty years.

The reader is given much food for thought on processes in the making of music which have

## PREFACE

received little or no attention from the large number of those who are learning, or are teaching, to make it.

From a careful study of these pages the listener as well as the performers (who above all need to listen) will find new interest added to life and an increased power of attention, from which a fuller enjoyment should result.

So much fun and happiness is lost to those who are really fond of music but have never learned enough of its language to understand more than two words at a time.

This book analyses these difficulties and makes many practical suggestions which are both stimulating and helpful. It makes good reading and undoubtedly carries one further along a road which has been little explored but is well worth the effort.

*March, 1926.*

HUGH P. ALLEN.

# THE BORDERLAND OF MUSIC AND PSYCHOLOGY

## I

### INTRODUCTION

#### PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

THIS book falls between two stools. It is about music and it is about psychology, and its intention is to explore the rather obscure region where the two studies touch one another. But its position is difficult and insecure by reason of the number of technical terms that have thrust themselves into the enquiries that it has set out to make. The difficulty of saying anything precise about music without a considerable technical vocabulary is notorious. Psychology has developed a terminology—frequently and rudely called a “jargon”—almost as extensive, but

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

more exasperating. Many of the facts with which psychology deals are familiar to everyone and common speech has words for them, but as the science has developed the need has arisen for much greater definition of language, more discrimination, greater delicacy and precision. Some words therefore (such as "instinct") have had to be refined in meaning; others (like "feeling") have had to have a new set of words invented or adapted to describe the different parts of what was formerly signified by the one vague word. This has resulted in a psychological vocabulary containing what to the ordinary reader seem like tiresome words for obvious things and ordinary words used in an extraordinary sense. The musical reader will be offended by the technicalities of psychology; the psychological reader will stumble over the unknown terms of musical criticism; the non-technical reader, ensnared right and left, will perish in the double bog. Yet technicalities are inevitable if any reasonable sort of precision is to be obtained. There is enough and to spare of vague musical criticism based on unscientific psychology—

## TYPICAL PROBLEMS

think, for example, of what has been written about emotion in music. And so the only thing for mapping out the almost unexplored territory of musical psychology is to proceed on scientific lines with a precise terminology. There is no help for it.

Music presents a number of phenomena which are commonplace enough as facts of experience, but which defy intelligible explanation in terms of anything else or even of one another. For example, most men derive pleasure from hearing music, but what is the nature of the pleasure? Is it intellectual like the pleasures of chess and mathematics? Is it emotional like the pleasures of making love or novel-reading? Is it sensual like the pleasure of a chocolate éclair or a warm bath? Or is it a gratification to the sub-conscious part of the mind comparable to the soothing effect of a day spent out of doors? These would seem to be fair questions for music to ask of psychology, though hitherto philosophy has generally framed the answers to them, and called them "aesthetics." Or take the ubiquitous phenomenon

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

of applause which is sometimes discussed as a problem in ethics, sometimes as a problem in manners. Musicians continually discuss it and cannot agree about its value: performers think there cannot be too much of a good thing, listeners are continually finding it inopportune and complain that it is nothing but a nuisance. It is a question both of morals and manners, and being a problem of behaviour it is fit matter for psychological investigation. Or approach this tract in the country of the mind from the other side. The psychologist is interested in any activity of the human mind and his motto is *humani nihil a me alienum puto*. Music presents him with many phenomena lying off the main track of investigation. Some of these have received attention; rhythm, for example, has been the subject of some experimental researches,<sup>1</sup> but the collective behaviour of audiences, a subject of vast importance to the executive artist, has not been systematically observed, although everyone who stands on a public platform soon

<sup>1</sup> *The American Journal of Psychology* for July 1924 gives a bibliography occupying five pages of that periodical.

## MUSIC AND LIFE

learns some of its characteristics. It ought therefore to be of some interest both to psychologists and musicians to submit to scientific examination the various familiar facts of a musician's experience. There may then be a chance of the psychologist adding to his knowledge of the workings of the human mind, and of the musician discovering the why and the wherefore of many of the stone-walls which have most hurt his head. Best of all, both together may illuminate the mysterious connections of music with the rest of life from which it appears to be so curiously detached—a detachment which is as refreshing as it is unreal.

These are large claims to make, too large for the modest results of the six essays in this book, which must be regarded rather as experiments in method than as contributions either to musical or psychological knowledge. Many psychological theories have been accepted more or less uncritically and applied to facts which are variously interpreted by musicians (programme music is an example). So hazardous a method can only be judged by its results. If these are

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

plausible they have some interest, if they fit in with other ascertained facts or familiar experience they have some chance of being true, if they lead to fresh examination of facts or experience they are at least useful, and if they lead on to new knowledge or reveal valid connections between hitherto unrelated branches of knowledge the presumption that they belong to the body of truth will be increased. Many people, however, will deny the validity of the method from the outset.

Psychology enjoyed a considerable boom in the years just after the war, but of late it has slumped in general esteem, and its claim to be regarded as a science at all is disputed both by scientists and philosophers. Each really brings against it the same criticism: that it is not scientific in its methods. The philosopher will allow that scientific method (by which is meant the collection of data, the framing of hypotheses, and their verification by measurement and other laboratory tests) is appropriate to certain kinds of subjects such as natural phenomena, and will yield valid results which he describes as empirical;

## CRITICISM OF PSYCHOLOGY

but he contends that this limited truth leaves so much unexplained as to be useful only for practical purposes. Thus, he argues, changes are observed to take place and can even be relied on to take place under appropriate conditions, which is useful for practical life; but change itself is a conception which we do not really understand at all. Does it consist, he asks, in remaining the same or becoming something else? The answer of course is "both," for if a thing has totally lost its identity it can no longer be spoken of as the subject of the change—it is something else, while if its identity were wholly preserved it could not be said to have changed. But we cannot, having said that, claim to know what change is. Similarly with other scientific terms like *growth* and *evolution*; they are useful counters of thought, but a statement which contains them does not reveal so much as disguise the truth we seek. Empirical truth about natural phenomena, however, is valid as far as it goes, and it is by employing the empirical method that psychology hopes to illuminate the nature of the human mind. But here the

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

philosophers and scientists enter a protest in unison: neither human behaviour nor the mind itself is capable of exact measurement, nor can complicating factors be isolated as in laboratory experiments. The scientist is content with hard facts if he can get them, but complains that the facts of psychology are not hard; the philosopher agrees and adds that if you want to find out anything about the mind, which is not a natural phenomenon of the same kind as the rocks of geology or the crystals of chemistry, you must not employ the empirical method at all. Thus at the moment psychology wears a flattened-out appearance, mangled between the upper mill-stone of philosophy and the lower of natural science.

Psychology as an independent science is young, and it is not unhealthy for youth to go through the mill. Psychology has proved tough enough to leave some impression on the mill that has ground it and truthfully retorts to its critics that every study always has made its own method. The mind that studies language is the same mind as studies logic or mathematics and in the

## THE REPLY OF PSYCHOLOGY

last resort employs the same processes, but the method of mathematics applied to language is unfruitful, and the method of history is only partially successful when applied to medicine. So biology and psychology are bound, because their subject is living organisms, to modify the strict method of chemistry and physics and supplement it with another method, such as that of immediate experience, which is not applicable to the 'natural' sciences. Psychology has several of these supplementary methods, not necessarily of equal value, but each yielding interesting results, which will be taken up into the main body of doctrine or not on exactly the same principles as any other discovery, namely whether they square with the rest of organized knowledge. New techniques have to be evolved in the pursuit of confirmations of new hypotheses: psycho-analysis is such a new technique: its general method is scientific in that it begins by collecting the facts in which the unknown  $\alpha$  occurs, but as the unknown is something dynamic and very much alive, the historical method will be used far more than in investigating the

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

nature of an inorganic chemical element or compound. At the moment psychology is willing to employ any method or any technique which promises to yield results. Some of the methods are speculative, and so as a consequence are their results; but this is not to say that they have no scientific value, for science would never yet have achieved any certainty had it not first employed the speculative imagination. No one is therefore bound to disbelieve all psychological facts and theories which have not, from their nature, received 'scientific' proof. Rather should one believe all that one can without forgoing the sceptical frame of mind of the true scientist. By holding on to such speculations a survey of the whole ground is gradually made, and when that is done theories may be judged by their success in covering the ground. My six essays are speculations of this kind.

By adopting so loose a method I have run risks, the most serious of which is the refusal to choose between a purposive and a rigidly deterministic view of psychology. I have, for example, not hesitated to supplement the herd

## CAUSE AND PURPOSE

instinct theory of ensemble playing and of artistic co-operation in general with a teleological theory borrowed from the late Arthur Clutton-Brock. To the biologist, and to some schools of psychological thought, purpose is not a conception that can be employed to explain the workings of the mind; it is only a convenient way of speaking employed by beings who pretend to a freedom of the will when they wish to describe the actions which they take towards certain fundamental ends that are in reality determined for them by quite other forces. "Purpose" says Mr. Julian Huxley, "is a term invented to denote a particular operation of the human mind" and the Freudian school of thought emphatically prohibits the use of any category but that of cause and effect. Prof. McDougall, however, declares that this mechanical attitude to the facts of mind ultimately stultifies itself and, whether one sees a divine purpose in the plan of the universe or not,<sup>1</sup> "purposive striving is a fundamental category" and "the process of purposive

<sup>1</sup> This divine purpose is the teleology which (according to Mr. Huxley) was destroyed by Darwin when he showed that "apparently purposive structures could arise by means of a non-purposive mechanism."

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

striving is to be regarded as radically different from mechanical sequence". We must, it seems, decide whether the progress of our lives—and all agree that life does move forward—is a process of propulsion or of traction, whether the motive power lies in the past or in the future. The conception of cause and effect enjoys an enormous prestige owing to the success which has attended its applications in natural science. But philosophically it seems to have no greater claims to be regarded as ultimate and self-intelligible than purpose. And Jung resolves the clash of these two incompatible categories, this Kantian autonomy, in a true Kantian way. Causality, he says, is only a point of view, "the two viewpoints are not antagonistic if they are regarded as *regulative principles of thought* and not as constituent principles of the process of nature itself". Whatever one makes of the philosophical problem involved, it seems certain that psychology has not yet reached the stage when it can afford to dispense with the results yielded by either principle. I therefore disregard their incompatibility and do an addition sum wherever the

## THE METHOD DEFENDED

one method will supplement the other. Such an apparently immoral proceeding may be defended more vigorously than I have attempted by a recourse to the philosophy of '*Als Ob*' (AS IF): both are "useful fictions". I have made use of either according as it promised to lead to interesting results. Every science starts from false or from logically contradictory ideas, and reaches by means of them conclusions that are harmonious with each other and with Nature, and so entitled to recognition as Truth. That splendid edifice of truth, mathematics, was built up on axioms and on ideas like that of absolute space which are later seen to be fictitious. Force and matter are fictions without which physics could tell us nothing; nor is it only among exact sciences that one finds fiction invaluable, in the economic world there is the economic man and in the moral, ideas of freedom, immortality, and so on. This philosophy of Hans Vaihinger brings all thought and all science with a comprehensive sweep into the same realm as art, which from Plato onward has been regarded as the invention of beautiful fictions. We need not

## PSYCHOLOGY AND MUSIC

hesitate to use both the fiction of cause and the fiction of purpose if they are found to supplement and correct each other. Perhaps some day psychology will be like anatomy, a closed science from which all roughnesses will have been smoothed and in which every part will harmoniously fit with the rest. Until then one must be something of a pragmatist and make use of every fiction that will 'work'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, for a discussion of the philosophy of "Als Ob" and its significance for science and art. An English translation of the original work has now (1924) been published by Kegan Paul.

## II

### GREGARIOUSNESS IN AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

IT is a fact of common observation that men's behaviour in association is different from their behaviour when they act alone on their individual responsibility. The difference may be for better or for worse. Through the influence of *esprit de corps* men may behave more generously, more magnanimously or more honourably than is their wont as ordinary private individuals: thus are volunteers obtained for forlorn hopes. Through the influence of mass emotion respectable citizens may burn down Town Halls. Men also act differently as individuals according as they are dealing with a corporation or with an individual person. So will a man risk his life for his country, but refuse to give up smoking for love of his wife. The honest man who pays less than his due to the Inland Revenue is not

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

uncommon. For these apparent anomalies the herd instinct, which governs the behaviour of many animals, is predominantly responsible. To the musician the influence of gregariousness is interesting: in the first of the two ways just described, because it is always in some degree animating an audience and determining its attitude to the performer; and in the second way because it influences the attitude of the performer towards his audience. What then are the most important characteristics of this gregarious instinct?

The primary instincts of man may be most satisfactorily regarded as determining a man's behaviour (behaviour is an ultimate term in psychology) through a cycle of those mental processes technically known as cognition, affection, and conation. Conscious voluntary action, no less than instinctive action, takes place through the agent first becoming aware of an object or situation (cognition), then feeling somehow towards it (affection), and finally moving himself and acting somehow in regard to it (conation). If by his action he modifies the situation then the

## THE HERD INSTINCT

whole process may be repeated until some particular purpose is realised. If gregariousness is an instinct, i.e. an innate tendency to behave in a particular way, we may expect it to manifest itself in thought,<sup>1</sup> feeling and action. And we do find that wherever two or three are gathered together the cognitive, affective and conative processes of the individual are modified; but this instinct does not work in quite the same way as do the primary instincts like combat or curiosity. The primary instinct is a tendency to a specific act roused by the apprehension of a specific object. The herd instinct, however, has no specific conation, nor is its excitement dependent on the perception of particular objects. Yet both upon thought, feeling and action, gregariousness has the most profound effects. In the realm of cognition the rapidity with which a panic spreads is a striking example of a power of apprehension, which operates infinitely more freely when the herd instinct is aroused than at other times. The herd instinct may therefore be said to have the trait of suggestibility as its chief organ on the

<sup>1</sup> Thought is a loose word and is intended to include every process by which a subject becomes aware of an object.

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

cognitive side. The panic also supplies an illustration of one of the emotional characteristics of gregariousness, viz. the complete abandonment of restraint and the great strength of the dominant emotion when it is felt collectively as well as individually. Its influence on action we have already seen, though it does not provide the herd with a specific action to accomplish. It does, however, secure uniformity of action; upon whatever action the herd is set, upon that the gregarious instinct directs the activity of all the members of the herd. In virtue of the fact that the herd instinct modifies action which has been already determined upon through other instincts or for other purposes, it is regarded, though a fundamental characteristic of the human mind, as a secondary instinct, acquired comparatively recently, perhaps by our non-human ancestors when they left the tree-tops for the plains. Such in brief is the origin and nature of gregariousness. How far is a concert audience a herd for the purposes of the excitement of the herd instinct?

Not every chance collection of people is a herd, though McDougall allows that the passengers in

## ARE AUDIENCES HERDS?

one compartment of a train on a long journey develop some of the characteristics of a herd; witness the silent animosity that greets a newcomer joining the train at a station en route. The people in a crowded street do not constitute a herd, though again the monstrous overgrowth of London and other big cities is attributed by McDougall to herd-feeling. But suppose a cyclist is knocked down by a motor car, this introduces a principle of organization and the fortuitous collection of individuals becomes a crowd. "The essential conditions of collective mental action are a common object of mental activity, a common mode of feeling in regard to it, and some degree of reciprocal influence between the members of the group" (McDougall). If instead of the crowd that surrounds an overturned cyclist we consider the audience at a concert, we have then a slightly more homogeneous and better organized crowd, though still a much more loosely-knit body than a meeting of some club or society where in addition to the group feeling there is also a consciousness of membership of the group. The higher

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

manifestations of the group spirit depend on this group consciousness, and this is one factor in the superiority of a musical club or of a subscription concert over the haphazard concert audience. None the less, in the heterogeneous crowd that constitutes a concert audience there is always the common object of the mental activity, viz. a common love of music or admiration for composers or executant. It may be argued that the motives for concert-going are many and various, but there is always present as one among the motives of concert-going the interest in music. The common mode of feeling towards it, the second characteristic of crowd life is a more doubtful proposition. The battles fought over the relative predominance of the classics and the moderns is one of the most obvious divisions of feeling that can mar the community of feeling of any audience. But now suppose that an audience has been listening, say, to one of our most captivating folk-songs sung by a great artist. What happens? Every member of the audience experiences a thrill of delight and the applause is immediate and thunderous. Why?

## CROWD EMOTION

The folk-song from the nature of the case has a universal appeal and our artist (we will suppose) is free from any distracting mannerisms and has left us with no two opinions about the perfection of his rendering; we have then realized complete homogeneity of feeling. When this happens the emotion of the individual is intensified: each experiences in his own person his own emotion multiplied, as it were, by a factor equal to the number of persons constituting the audience. The third condition is realized, a high degree of reciprocal influence is experienced. McDougall says that this intensification of emotion is one of the most striking results of the formation of a crowd, and is one of the principal sources of the attractiveness of the crowd. "By participation in the mental life of a crowd, one's emotions are stirred to a pitch that they seldom or never attain under other conditions. This is for most men an intensely pleasurable experience: they are, as they say, carried out of themselves", i.e. they are experiencing, literally, ecstasy. The thunderousness of the applause has also considerable psychological significance and belongs to the

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

conative side of music.<sup>1</sup> Suppose now that the song has been sung in a quiet music room to an audience of two or three friends. The aesthetic satisfaction is the same but the sum total of pleasurable feeling is less; there is no ecstasy. The quality of the feeling is the same but its quantity is less, and a symptom of this is that there will be no applause, only a murmured 'thank you', or a silence of comprehension. The absence of herd-feeling cannot affect the aesthetic satisfaction of the performance, except indeed to give it in a purer form unalloyed with other emotional elements, but it does mean that there is no intensification of the emotion; and on the performer's side, while he too gets his measure of pure aesthetic satisfaction, there is an absence of the thrill of exhilaration, and the sense of power that comes from being a member of, or co-operating with, a herd.

We have considered an audience with a high degree of homogeneity of feeling. The ordinary concert with its motley audience and mixed programme does not present so simple a case, but

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 27 and Essay on Applause.

## CROSS-CURRENTS OF FEELING

it is the case of most frequent occurrence. Here we may suppose that some part of the audience has gone primarily for the sake of hearing a certain executant, say a singer: his songs (suppose two groups) will straightway divide the homogeneity of this group into some six or eight smaller nuclei; these eight nuclei will receive some reinforcement from others who admire the particular song because it is a work of their favourite composer but whose main interest in the concert is the violin playing. The violinist's numbers will again divide the feeling of the audience: cross-currents of feeling of every kind will be introduced by the taste of the individual listener; one will admire the executant's technique and be offended by his choice of music, another like his tone but find him lacking in vitality and rhythm. Psychologically this means that though these currents of feeling coincide and reinforce one another at points the total result is that the amount of group feeling realized is small because the objects of attention are various, and the feeling evoked towards them common only to isolated small nuclei in the audience, and the amount

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

of intensification of feeling is small owing precisely to this lack of homogeneity of feeling. But if into a situation of this kind we introduce our perfect folk-song we establish complete homogeneity of feeling and allow at any rate this one channel along which an uprush of intensified feeling can flow. A concert at which this happens will always appear more successful than one at which each listener merely takes away some small measure of private aesthetic satisfaction; and rightly so, for the double reason that this group feeling when not indulged to excess is a proper and valuable one, and also that almost any work of art, if superbly done, can evolve the homogeneity of feeling which is required to arouse group feeling. The practical corollary is that the concert giver should provide at least one such occasion for homogeneous feeling in every programme so far as previous calculation can ensure it. And we have here the explanation of a fact that is often deplored on purely musical grounds that an indifferent singer will apparently give more aesthetic satisfaction than a superior artist in a less popular medium of

## APPLAUSE, FEELING AND MERIT

expression, at any rate as judged by the applause. As a matter of fact the applause bears only an indirect relation to the aesthetic satisfaction it is supposed to express.<sup>1</sup> It testifies rather to the amount of group feeling realized, and by the law of intensification of group emotion the enthusiasm of an audience is an expression of the homogeneity rather than of the quality of the feeling. The indirect relation of the applause to the artistic merits of the music is of course that the more convincing and universally satisfying is the musician's art the more homogeneous is the aesthetic satisfaction it evolves. It should be noted that the aesthetic satisfaction must be regarded not as a variable but as a constant factor in the listener's total experience at the concert. The actual nature of that satisfaction is one of the most disputed philosophical problems and goes beyond psychological investigation. A possible view of its nature will, however, emerge as the book proceeds.

It is necessary to regard it as a constant factor psychologically because from an artistic point of

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V.

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

view music is subject to no laws but its own. Hence our psychological concert-giver in putting into his programme an item that will induce a maximum of group-feeling is not absolved from the obligations of musical decency, and artistic considerations must not give way to purely psychological ones. The concert-giver who does not treat his artistic factor as a constant but scales down its value is no longer worthy of attention as an artist but only as a salesman. It is a mistake, however, to regard the claims of musical art as in their nature incompatible with other considerations. In the practical business of making music for the world other factors than the artistic inevitably enter, so that the wise thing is to recognize them and mark out their proper spheres; if the artist would do this with as much care as he devotes to the actual music, many excellent movements for spreading a love of the best music among the musically uneducated would meet with a larger measure of success.

A further deduction as to the nature of applause may be drawn from our psychological enquiry. There is a tendency nowadays to try

## FEELING AND ACTION

to prevent audiences applauding between the movements of chamber music and symphonies, when it is quite plain that the general feeling of the audience, independently of the distressing habits of the applause-fiend, is to applaud.<sup>1</sup> It may be affectation; it cannot really be justified on musical grounds; for psychological reasons it is indefensible. Action is defined psychologically as moving a part of the body. All impressions received through the senses react on the mind, i.e. they produce an emotional effect which tends to express itself in action. During the long movements of a symphony this tendency is held in check and the emotion to be discharged banks up behind the obstruction, which is of course the continuation of the sound. If, when the natural obstruction is removed, the discharge is still repressed, mental pain results (the pain is slight, it is true, but it does not make for feelings of ease and satisfaction), and the audience is denied the chance of doing something together. No one feels that the applause at the end of an emotionally exacting act in the theatre breaks

<sup>1</sup> This question is more fully discussed in the essay on *Applause*; see especially pp. 145 and 157.

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

the thread of the plot or destroys the unity of the piece (curtain-raising and the bowing of acknowledgements are different and are very objectionable). It is a mistaken idea to attempt to present a symphony as a unity so simple as to evoke only one emotional response, and it overlooks the most elementary law of attention, which operates rhythmically, as the composer very well knows and shows that he knows in the disposition of his climaxes. The pain of being unable to *act* after listening to music is also experienced whenever applause is inappropriate, as in sacred music or in sacred buildings; and the authorities in these cases generally do their best for the audience by giving them an opportunity of singing a hymn or putting money in the plate or giving some such small occasion for the discharge of the conative impulse. Repression of spontaneous human activity should always be reduced to a minimum, and when it is entirely unnecessary as in a concert-room, it should not be dragged in gratuitously by demands for complete silence between the movements of a work.

## FELLOWSHIP AND THE HERD

From a consideration of what the herd instinct is and what it does in the realm of music we turn to the question what is its value and what is its purpose. It is not enough to give an account of the way in which we became possessed of our social feelings; and to pretend that we like social life and admire *esprit de corps* because our pre-human ancestors hunted for their food in packs like wolves will carry neither conviction nor satisfaction to anyone save the most rigid biologist. The musician will take a good deal of persuading that the string quartet and the herd of swine which rushed violently down a certain steep place are phenomena of the same nature. Mr. Clutton-Brock offers us a theory of fellowship which supplements the herd-instinct explanation by showing the present nature of the social bond. Co-operation and doing things together took their origin in man's social instinct, but the purpose they now serve and the value they now have are quite different, and are termed by Mr. Clutton-Brock<sup>1</sup> a desire for the transcendent, i.e. a desire for closer unity than

<sup>1</sup> In lectures on *Psychology of Fellowship* at Manchester College, Oxford, 1921, which unfortunately were never published by him.

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

we have ever attained to. We find an analogy in music in the mysterious phenomenon of concordance. A major triad may be explained as to its origins by a physical account of vibrations, but if you ask what is the value and the purpose of the sounding together of the three tones that compose the triad you can only say that it makes a harmony, a something different from the sum-by-addition of the three notes; a new unity is compounded which carries with it an intrinsic satisfaction. So the transcendent unity at which we aim in fellowship is a kind of harmony attained by the co-operation of individuals. And the example which he gives of such a fellowship as compared with the activities of the Gadarene swine or the burning of Luton Town Hall a few years ago is the playing of an orchestra. The playing of an orchestra and the burning of a town hall are both spontaneous activities undertaken by human beings acting in concert, and yielding a feeling of ease and delight and intrinsic satisfaction; but Mr. Clutton-Brock points out some four respects in which they differ, differences which involve something more

## HERD-FEELING *VERSUS* FELLOWSHIP

than herd-instinct to account for them. These are briefly (1) that the sense of power which attends both these collective activities is not in the case of the orchestra a mere by-product of an instinct but is willed, and indeed can only be obtained by practice. The E minor symphony of Brahms is deliberately played and listened to in order to bring about in all concerned the feeling of strength, of being braced, of realizing power, which is the meaning of the music. The delight of burning down a public building is a release from all repressions, and men do not will the release of their repressions as the will is the wielder of the repressing force; they only discover when mob frenzy has released the repressions that they experience a feeling of delight. In a word the one activity is consciously willed, the other is sub-conscious and blind. (2) The one activity is valued by all concerned—players and audience and as much as the rest of the world as believes the playing of Brahms's symphonies to be valuable. The wrecking of a Town Hall is valued by the wreckers, but the wreckage is not; neither

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

wrecking nor wreckage is appreciated by rate-payers nor by any good citizens.

(3) Unlike the mob the orchestra has full control of its feelings (and the feelings are intensified by fellowship as we have seen); it obeys the conductor. The mob is unconscious of what is dominating it and has its feelings completely out of control. In contrast to this unconsciousness the orchestra may be said to be in a state of 'rational ecstasy' or supra-consciousness which can be corrected at any moment by the conductor tapping his desk.

(4) The self of the individual doing the co-operation is not obliterated; his identity is not lost but heightened. The clarinet player will make his clarinetting a more significant thing because it is part of a greater whole than he can make it if he were to stand up and play a solo. It is a right feeling that a pianist has a fuller opportunity for self-expression in playing a concerto than in playing a Chopin Ballade or even a Beethoven sonata.

The secret then of the fascination of any kind of ensemble playing is to be found in the fact

## ENSEMBLE PLAYING

that it involves fellowship. There is a place for every form of art; the tiniest, most lyrical, most individual gem has a value that Art could not afford to lose, but it is again a right feeling which assigns to a symphony a bigger and deeper significance. The big idea, it is felt, needs as its medium of expression the bigness which can only be obtained from the co-operation of individuals which is realized in fellowship. This, and not any musico-physical explanation about timbre, is the real reason why the organ with its very considerable powers of interpreting great ideas cannot be compared with the orchestra as a medium for expressing ideas of symphonic dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

A further deduction must be drawn from the phenomena of orchestral playing. The fellowship is realized by *doing* together, i.e. we have a form of artistic conation, an exercise of the creative activity. In music we are bound to regard the composer's activity as the creative activity *in excelsis*, the intuition of Croce<sup>2</sup> in the fullest

<sup>1</sup> We cannot with Stravinsky and his school return to crude sensationalism and regard music as mere sound : it is essentially 'meaning'.

<sup>2</sup> Croce's view of art, which I accept, is that its essence is "intuition", i.e. a kind of knowledge. In mathematics one either sees the truth

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

sense; but the activity of the interpreter and of the listener is the same activity exercised in lower degrees. The audience, then, as well as the orchestra, is united in *doing* something, viz. performing the musical activity of listening, and a further fellowship is realized between orchestra and audience. At any kind of concert unless the audience is actively co-operating with the performers the full significance of the music cannot possibly be brought out—the music, whatever it is, will remain only a technical performance. Mr. Plunket Greene calls the bond between audience and performer 'magnetism', an elusive thing but essential for the production of aesthetic experience. His 'magnetism' is our 'fellowship', and its indispensability may be gauged from the introspective analysis of any unsuccessful musical performance (the worthiness or otherwise of the music performed does

of a proposition or one does not; one cannot prove that two and two make four to anyone who cannot see or "intuit" the truth of it for himself. The composer's inspiration is an act of this kind. The intuition is then expressed in some form; without the expression there is no intuition. This strict use of intuition must, of course, be distinguished from its colloquial sense: feminine guess-work, to which it is usually applied, contains elements of desire and feeling which too often land the mind into the ditch of error after it has made the leap which is properly described as intuition.

not affect the 'success' of the performance in this sense in any way). An extreme case may be cited where a concert was given to the patients in a lunatic asylum. A more painful experience can hardly be imagined. Nothing whatever came back from the audience; the performers poured out all the 'magnetism' at their command but there was no response, no co-operation or common feeling was generated, the music began to lose its significance to the performers, until it ceased to be even a technical reproduction of well-known sounds and was dissolved into isolated chords and notes that were ejaculated by certain visual stimuli in exactly the same way as sounds are ejaculated from a pianola by means of pneumatic stimuli. The indispensability of an audience to the consummation of the act of music may also be seen by comparing a rehearsal with a performance. The unsatisfactory character of music heard from a gramophone or through wireless transmission is due almost as much to the one-sided nature of its production as its inevitable distortion of the composer's message. The performers have, of

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

course, a potential audience in mind, but they can hardly draw from it inspiring magnetism; rather are they likely to be constrained by the consciousness that all unwittingly they may be producing some unintended effect which they will be powerless to modify, conceal or put right.<sup>1</sup> The conditions in a gramophone or broadcasting studio are really those of a rehearsal with this constraint added, and listeners—although they will deny this strenuously—never seem to obtain artistic pleasure from what they hear. Wireless listeners are pleased because it is Spain that is calling, or because they are listening to the voice of one with a great name, or because transmission is free from atmospherics to-night, or because they have heard someone cough or applaud across the ether. Gramophone users have fewer distractions, and what

<sup>1</sup> I speak without any very extensive personal experience of broadcasting, but I was acutely aware of this constraint on the one occasion on which I have broadcast a lecture: I was very nervous, I got no encouragement from the microphone such as one draws from the human eye, I had to stick much more closely than I liked to my written notes, and—in a word—my style was cramped as a result. In playing the piano accompaniments of my illustrations, however, I was not quite so nervous, though I could not throw off my constraint. As a listener except for strictly intellectual purposes I am bored in no time. Broadcasting I find less boring aesthetically than the gramophone because the human contacts are a little closer, but less useful from the point of view of getting to know particular works.

## THE COMPOSER AND AUDIENCES

they can and do derive from their records with great benefit to themselves is all the knowledgeable part of music. But aesthetic boredom always hovers close over either the desiccated or the condensed forms of music, because the human contacts are remote and precarious.

The physical proximity necessary for musical performance is not necessary for the composition of music. The composer, like the writer, is penning his message for a future and widely scattered audience, but no composer would be content—and few (except Schubert) would be able—to go on writing indefinitely for his own library shelf or waste-paper basket. His audience though absent when he writes his symphony will be present when it is played and at one remove will influence his intuitions. A similar variant of the audience is the case of a man playing to himself, when he is his own audience and by a kind of division of his personality co-operates with himself. Introspection again shows that solitary music of this kind is very far from satisfying, a crumb in a time of famine, perhaps, but little more. If there is to be expression,

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and in the Crocean philosophy the expression and the artistic intuition are one, there must be a partner in the activity; in fact Croce's doctrine of expression is incomplete unless one adds (as Clutton-Brock and Lascelles Abercrombie do) that expression is always an effort of communion or communication.

A good deal of emphasis has of late been put upon the fact that the listener is exercising the artistic activity and is not merely the passive subject of an artistic experience. Art may in this respect be contrasted with an entertainment such as one gets at a music-hall. Here the audience is passive, and the violence and the pace with which the 'turns' are hurled at the audience precludes any activity on its part. The social and economic effects of this passivity of the audience at entertainments are the lament not only of the sociologist but of the musician, who finds it increasingly difficult to get full houses of the people who most properly ought to be there—the people who do the work of the world. The fullness of the cinema and the half-emptiness of many concerts is a symptom

## THE LISTENER'S ACTIVITY

of the industrial disease which makes workers over-worked and mentally lazy. At a concert as at a serious play, the listener is active not passive, and comes away, as from athletic activity, exercised, more healthy, more fully developed, but tired at the moment.

In listening to music, then, there would seem to be a conative as well as a cognitive element, and emotion is always involved, though individuals differ in the importance which they assign to it in their appreciation of music.<sup>1</sup> The three terms of the complete cycle of mental activity are fused and indivisible in the artistic intuition, and there is no difficulty in reconciling intuition with the threefold process. One is a philosophical, the other a psychological, way of looking at the same facts. The cycle is not necessarily a succession in time of three different activities; rather it is a discrimination of three elements which are simultaneously present in one act. In making a psychological analysis one inevitably divides for purposes of examination what in operation is indivisible. Psychology

<sup>1</sup> The place of emotion in music is discussed at length in Chap. III.

## AUDIENCES AND PERFORMERS

is primarily concerned with behaviour, and art is something more than a species of behaviour, hence a merely psychological account of what happens in the mind when it is engaged in the artistic activity is not enough. In so far as artistic activity leads to behaviour, psychology has a good deal that is valuable to say; but the Fifth Symphony cannot properly be described as a piece of behaviour, though the audience which listens to the Fifth Symphony certainly exhibits behaviour. The conation of composing, conducting or listening to the Fifth Symphony may be described in psychological terms, but the symphony itself, the thing created, performed or heard, the goal and object of the artistic activity, must be described philosophically. Psychology studies origins and processes, looks at the past and the present, but cannot look forward nor give an adequate account of the purposes and products of the activity of the human spirit. We step beyond psychology when, after saying what musicians and audiences do, we ask, "What is Music?"

### III

#### EMOTION IN MUSIC

In one form or another controversy is always raging in musical discussion round the question how far music is emotional. The most recent battle in this philosophic war was fought over the living body of Stravinsky. This was in the nature of a counter-stroke to the great successes achieved not long before by Strauss, to whom the issue presented itself as a contest between 'abstract,' 'absolute' or 'pure' music on the one hand and 'programme' music on the other. Sir Hubert Parry has called sonata form an aristocratic form of art, and the formalists (if I may so call those who belittle the place of emotion in music) long maintained a very haughty attitude towards the 'new' music. The issue of the Straussian war, however, was the enfranchisement of the symphonic poem,

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

and Mr. Ernest Newman devoted half a book<sup>1</sup> to the assertion of the equality of the two kinds of music. The settlement thus reached has not really been upset by the Stravinsky skirmishings, and represents the present position of aesthetic theory, which may be stated in the words of Vernon Lee:<sup>2</sup>

“ Music presents two sets of psychological phenomena. It can suggest and stimulate feelings akin to those produced by the vicissitudes of real life; and it can interest, fascinate, delight, or weary and displease, by what we can only call the purely musical beauty of its sound patterns. Music thus awakens two different kinds of emotion—a dramatic one referred to its expressiveness, and an aesthetic one connected with the presence or absence of what is known as beauty.”

This compromise represents the outcome of the nineteenth century wars, the ferocity of which amazes us who can enjoy both Wagner and Brahms without any feelings of strain or double-

<sup>1</sup> *Musical Studies*, 1905. Mr. Newman has, I believe, since modified his views.

<sup>2</sup> *Quarterly Review*, 1906.

## THREE AESTHETIC THEORIES

dealing. From that far-off strife we inherit the classical statement of the formalists' case, Hanslick's (the Viennese critic's) 'The Beautiful in Music', beyond which there is no need to go in the history of the controversy. The issue has mainly been narrowed down to absolute versus programme music, which is not quite the same as the wider problem, whether music is in its nature emotional or something else, and seems to introduce a cross-classification into the three main types of aesthetic theory. These are the biological view (e.g. of Darwin and Grant Allen) that music is in essence sensational; the view that it is mainly intellectual held by Kant, the modern philosopher Croce, Hanslick and probably by most composers; and the view that its nature is fundamentally emotional, which is the opinion of most philosophers (e.g. Plato, Hegel) and is shared by Wagner. But the biological view commands no assent nowadays: it is too narrow to account for the facts, and curiously enough assigns too small a part to evolution, so that it hardly gets beyond the origin of music and therefore inevitably falsifies its account of what music

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

is now. Hence there will be little confusion if the issue of emotion versus intellect is decided on the battlefield of programme music. This accepted distinction between 'pure' and programme music is undeniably useful for practical purposes, and when you are considering extreme cases like a string quartet of Mozart and a symphonic poem or even a Wagnerian opera it seems only natural to regard this distinction as a real division of music into two distinct kinds. But when you come to border-line cases, like Beethoven's Eroica or Fifth or Choral Symphony, where are you? On which side of the line do they fall? The Fifth Symphony, for example, is as proper a symphony as any by Haydn or Mozart, yet few will deny that there is a drama being enacted behind the weaving of the themes. On a smaller scale, if a composer calls a little piece for piano a nocturne, he presumably means something by the title, even if he is not attempting to describe or suggest any particular time or event. Does his little piece in ternary form constructed with a view to formal beauty therefore become programme music?

## MUSIC EXPRESSES EMOTION

Surely the truth is that the distinction is at bottom unreal, however useful it may be as a rough classification to be applied according to the degree in which different elements are mixed in a given work. Any music, which is worth the name, and is not mere sound or student's harmony exercise or virtuosity composition such as the work of Vieuxtemps, a good deal of Liszt and empty *coloratura* singing, expresses something, and that something is mainly composed of emotion. Every mental process, i.e. all experience, involves emotion in some degree. We feel somehow about everything, but it is only when the emotion (which gives value to the experience) is a prominent part of the experience that it is appropriate for artistic treatment. Thus when you look upon a rural scene you feel somehow about it and, if strongly moved by it, you could express your feelings in a pastoral symphony which would then be the expression of a "feeling of the country-side" emotion. One way of inducing this country-side emotion in your audience is to reproduce the sounds of the country. There are others. It is possible—Wagner

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

has done it, so has Delius—to write Nature music which is not imitation but which does produce emotions similar to those which you experience when you contemplate Nature. But one way is to *represent* the sounds of the country or by some plain analogies suggest the sights of the country. When a composer does this he is writing the cruder kind of programme music. Beethoven said of his sixth symphony that he was expressing the feelings, rather than painting a picture, of the country. But as a matter of fact though he may be presenting feelings he does use the method of painting to some extent to arouse them. The essential point is that the psychological content of music does not admit of the distinction, which is solely one of method or treatment. If the composer chose the direct path of calling up in the hearer the same emotions as he felt by means of the same kind of stimulus, that is one method; the other method is to stimulate the emotions in you by the subtle methods of communication known to psychology as sympathy and emotional memory (a valuable conception of M. Ribot which is discussed below

## PROGRAMME MUSIC

on pp. 78 *et seq.*) which will make use of sound as their vehicle. But it is the same emotion. All music of any value is at bottom programme music, i.e. it is a commentary on life and not something divorced from the rest of life.

The whole bother has arisen because of the serious technical difficulty that is found in making the language of music, which has its own grammar and its own logic, tell its emotional story (which in music is inevitably of a general character) parallel with the unfolding of the particular instance of the emotion with which the programme is dealing. This difficulty is of course found most acutely in opera where a dramatic situation, which develops most powerfully by condensation, has to move in harness with music, which contrariwise demands expansion. Hence where composers have been content to express emotion in general terms their work has been free to develop rapidly and come to perfection in the various musical forms (first movement form, rondo, etc.); but where they have wished to express every element in a complex emotional experience they have been

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troubled by this difficulty which seems inseparable from the programme method—the difficulty, that is, of making the music develop according to a logic not its own. There can be little doubt that what the portrayal of an emotion loses in universality by the programme method it gains in poignancy and vivid truthfulness. Emotion is rarely experienced pure (i.e. as pure fear, pure anger, etc.), and sorrow and love are complex emotional states. Every instance therefore of the emotion, say, of love will be slightly different from every other instance. So that the love of Tristan and Isolde will evoke a slightly different emotion (in the composer and in the audience) from the love of Romeo and Juliet. By following the programme method therefore, the composer will gain in vividness and detail, as compared with a generalized expression of love, such as one gets, shall we say, in a slow movement of Beethoven's (e.g. of the Fourth Symphony or the Violin Concerto). In painting, it may be noted, one cannot get a purely general expression of love—the programme in that art is indispensable; in architecture as in 'absolute' music

## UNIVERSAL AND PARTICULAR

one can't really get a programme but can only have the general expression. In the great masterpieces of literature one gets the universal element expressed with all the richness of the individual, when the particular programme chosen is like the great stories of folk-lore, the expression of a typical or general aspect of human life—Oedipus the type of the strong man in the clutch of circumstance; Hamlet the man of thought, called to be a man of action when a conflict of duties prompts in opposite directions; Antony representing the struggle which thousands of men know in a slighter form, the conflict of an ego with a sex complex (to use the technical terms of psychology). For a reason of this kind Wagner's *Ring* has some claim to be called the greatest musical work ever written, because, belonging to the genus programme music, it expresses the greatness and depth of the universal with all the force, vividness and detail of a particular case.

It is easy therefore to see the value of the distinction between programme and pure music and to recognize the implications of the word

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

‘programme’ which we have just reviewed—the method of imitation, the control of musical form by a literary or other external logic, the emphasis on the particulars, rather than on the general nature, of the experience portrayed. But to go beyond this and say with Ernest Newman and Vernon Lee that music is two things not one, and derived from two different powers of the mind, is a desperate expedient; and so far from settling, it only raises in an acute form an aesthetic problem as fascinating as any in philosophy and more elusive than most, viz. the nature of artistic satisfaction. Being a philosophical question it has had many answers, but can never be definitely settled. Recent developments in psychological theory, however, suggest a new line of approach to the ancient problem. For most of what has been written was written in the absence of anything like a systematic psychology of the emotions, which only began with William James,<sup>1</sup> but which has now accumulated a certain body of doctrine from the work of Ribot, McDougall and some of the ‘newer’

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, Macmillan. 1890.

## FORM *VERSUS* EMOTION

psychologists. To those who have a taste for speculation a review of the phenomena of music in the light of this doctrine is not unattractive.

If we start from what I have called the present aesthetic, which was summarized in the words of Vernon Lee, quoted above, we find a dualism. There are two entirely distinct sorts of music which have nothing in common except that they both are made of sound and up to a point employ the same technique.<sup>1</sup> One is concerned with emotion, the other with beauty. This antithesis is derived from Hanslick, who, however, is unable to maintain it at all sharply. Indeed it is possible to collect from his book and put over against one another a large number of inconsistent passages. What he wishes on the whole to establish, however, is that music is in essence formal not emotional. "The arabesque, a branch of the act of ornamentation, dimly betokens in what manner music may exhibit forms of beauty, though no definite emotion be involved." That emotion plays a part in music he cannot deny. What that place is varies from

<sup>1</sup> Ernest Newman's position is that there are two sorts of music but that there is no hard and fast line dividing them.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

page to page according to the argument of the moment: he will for example allow it to extemporization, but not to composition. — “ Though in our opinion ” he writes, “ the chief and fundamental task of musical aesthetics consists in subordinating the supremacy usurped by the feelings to the legitimate one of beauty—since the organ of pure contemplation, from which and for the sake of which the truly beautiful flows, is not our emotional, but our imaginative faculty—yet the positive phenomena of the emotions play too striking and important a part in our musical life to admit of the question being settled by simply affecting this subordination.”

Here we have the old psychological error of regarding the mind as a bundle of faculties. “ The organ of pure contemplation is not our emotional but our imaginative faculty.” Each sense has an organ, seeing the eye, hearing the ear and so on: similarly it was argued that the mind possessed an organ of feeling and an organ of contemplating. This is now discredited. The mind has the power of carrying out a number of recognizably distinct operations, but they

## INTELLECT VERSUS EMOTION

are functions of the mind in which the mind acts as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Hanslick's antithesis between feeling and beauty therefore falls to the ground. But more than this follows. The antithesis between intellect and emotion which is a commonplace of ordinary life, which is recognized by psychologists,<sup>2</sup> and which for musicians is a veritable Scylla and Charybdis,<sup>3</sup> must be worked much less hard than heretofore. The tendency nowadays is to speak of "emotionally-toned ideas", even of "emotionally-tinged concepts",<sup>4</sup> of "prolonged and intellectualized emotions".<sup>5</sup> Cognitive and emotional elements in any psychosis (the name given to any portion of our mental flux, which has a substantive unity) are now recognized not as different parts of the experience, this one and then that, not even quite like a mixture, but fused together like the

<sup>1</sup> The pathological cases of multiple and alternating personality corroborate this view. When the mind does split it splits into two minds and not into two or three groups of faculties, although in cases of aphasia we have an example of the dissociation of one power of the mind.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Ribot "Every feeling loses its strength in the measure that it becomes intellectualized".

<sup>3</sup> The sight of Tchaikowski overwhelmed in Charybdis has driven many a modern composer into the clutches of the Scylla.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. W. Brown.

<sup>5</sup> Ribot.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

elements of a chemical compound, except that the proportion of the one to the other varies from moment to moment as it does not in the chemical analogy. We may therefore expect to find that a work of art will be made up of its sensational elements (sound, colour, etc.) along with this intellect-emotion amalgam, and indeed all ordinary criticism of music assumes that it is so, but is prone to fall into the error of regarding them as so many separable ingredients.

We have thus not only cleared the ground of Hanslick's and Vernon Lee's false antithesis between beauty and emotion but have also seriously undermined the antithesis on which the division of music into the abstract and the programme species is founded. But there remain two views, held by different schools, of the nature of abstract music which must be discussed before we can put forward a theory which will save us from dualism and at the same time preserve both the intellectual and emotional elements which are recognizable beyond all blinking. One is the revival in a disguised form of the biological view which has already been dismissed

## ABSTRACT MUSIC: TWO VIEWS

as inadequate. The disciples of Stravinsky<sup>1</sup> have really gone back to pure sensationism, though they disguise it by invoking a "purely musical emotion" of which they can give no account. They use the term 'emotion' loosely and unscientifically for sensation; the possibilities of a purely musical emotion however are discussed below.<sup>2</sup> The other which is persuasively advocated by M. Combarieu<sup>3</sup> and finds much support among orthodox musicians (Sir Charles Stanford for example implies as much in his "Musical Composition") is that music is a unique kind of thought. "La musique est l'art de penser avec des sons sans concepts." The objection to this is that though instrumental music is very well described in terms of thought —the 'development' of a 'theme' or 'subject' (=topic), 'reply' 'dialogue' etc.— other arts like painting and poetry cannot be so described nor be similarly defined, and no aesthetic can be regarded as satisfactory which cannot find a common framework into which

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Edwin Evans and Mr. Arthur Bliss are two representative names.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 69—72.

<sup>3</sup> *La Musique, ses Lois, son Evolution.* Flammarion, Paris, 1920.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

all the arts will fit. That aesthetic experience, from whatever art it is derived, is in essence the same, is overwhelmingly testified by the use of ordinary language, which applies the terms 'art' and 'beauty' to poetry, painting, architecture and the rest as well as to music, and employs the same adjectives in describing their effects.

The individual's experience as revealed by introspection is that the mind reacts similarly when it confronts a lyric poem, a cathedral or a symphony. Common language shows that this introspective evidence may be trusted and that all men are agreed on art being one kind and not several kinds of things. Music does give most difficulty of all the arts to fit into a scheme, but a theory of it which describes it as a unique kind of thought is invalidated *ab initio* if it will not also fit the drama or architecture. The element of truth in Combarieu's definition and the doctrine which it epitomises is that music does obey its own laws and that the composer's technique of 'developing thematic material' involves a distinct kind of thought which may properly be

## MUSICAL LOGIC

called musical thought without concepts. But the technique of composition is not the same thing as the aesthetic experience of music. This kind of musical thought should more properly be termed "musical logic". When an artist's experience finds expression in music the form of the expression, even in the case of music with a literary or dramatic 'programme', is controlled by a logic that is purely musical. It must be true that in the last resort the principles which govern the development of musical themes and rhythms have a psychological foundation, but a syncopation or a modulation in music, whatever emotion it may most adequately express, is a musical phenomenon, and subject to musical laws. Every medium of expression has its own technique, and technique is only the practical work of making the expression cogent. If one uses words as one's medium, the experience determines *what* one says, but considerations of grammar and ordinary intellectual logic, i.e. verbal technique, are limiting factors in the choice and use of words. Besides the strict logic of mathematics and pure reasoning there is also a

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

logic of feeling, which when applied to practical affairs is called 'common sense', and in some cases 'compromise'; conduct, the expression in action of a state of mind, may thus have a logic of its own. Similarly in art the expression of a state of mind will be logical with a logic which varies from art to art; it is no use applying the technique of pottery to ironwork or of wood-carving to scene-painting for the theatre. The divergence of dramatic and musical logic and the operatic wreckage it has caused is a commonplace of musical history. Moreover a *leit-motif* suffers development just as much as a first subject, and without distribution of keys and rhythmic variation in a symphonic poem, pictorial suggestiveness itself would be impossible. But thematic material and its development do not make a symphony. A critic recently wrote of a new symphony: "To invent clear-cut definite tunes for a symphony in a way which is entirely logical, so that there is no patch of which one may say 'Here he loses the thread and becomes irrelevant' is to produce a work deserving honourable mention.

## THE THEORY ENUNCIATED

Yet its structural regularity was oppressive. There was no hint of an adventure anywhere, no striving to look beyond the horizon, and the horizon seemed so very near, so obvious. There must, one felt, be something more in music than that if this elaborate symphony-making is to be worth while. But what?" My answer is "Emotion".

What is emotion and how does it get into music? I propose to adopt McDougall's view of the nature of emotion and to develop the thesis that all the music which one wants to hear is programme music; that the programme is mainly emotional, that the emotions which are "expressed" in or "are the subject matter" of music are the ordinary emotions of life and not as some psychologists<sup>1</sup> and many musicians declare, peculiar to music or purely musical emotions; that this emotional content is the subject of that pure intuition which Croce has described as the essence of artistic creation; and that every work of art (and therefore all music) is a judgement of value, in which the intellectual

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Dr. W. Brown.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

element is represented by the word 'judgement' and the emotional by the word 'value'; I argue elsewhere<sup>1</sup> that emotion is the source of our values. A judgement of value, then, casts a feeling into the form of a judgement, which is a logical proposition involving and addressed to the intellect. When we say "This is good", we communicate in that short proposition a fact and an emotion. The communication is intellectual: the emotion communicated, though recognizably distinct, is inseparable from the intellectual judgement. The psychosis is invisible. Similarly what happens in Art is that some experience of an emotional character, which from the nature of the case is fleeting, has somehow been caught up and crystallized by the intellect in somewhat the same kind of way as the particular facts apprehended by the intellect are caught up and crystallized in concepts. This crystallized emotion is the work of art. On the face of it Wordsworth's famous definition of art as "emotion recollected in tranquillity" seems inadequate, but it

<sup>1</sup> Essay V, p. 173.

## McDOUGALL'S HYPOTHESIS

does embody this central idea that an evanescent experience has somehow been caught and given a permanent form.

We are all familiar with emotional states by our own direct experience of them, and psychologists tried for long enough to make out an exhaustive list of the various emotions, each of which has a peculiar quality. But the lists when they had got them led nowhere and only resulted in confusion, for our emotional life does not appear to introspection as a succession of this, that and the other, but as a continually changing stream in which one element comes into prominence and then fades into something else; fear to curiosity, curiosity to annoyance or anger, anger to disgust and so on. McDougall has therefore put forward a hypothesis about the general nature of emotion, which systematises the emotions and brings them into relation with the other phenomena of mind, and yet allows for the distinctive qualities of the different emotions recognized by common speech and literature. This hypothesis does not yet command

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

universal assent among psychologists, but it is finding increasing support and in the absence of any equally comprehensive account may safely be accepted as the starting point for any enquiry that involves the study of the emotions. The hypothesis is that emotion is the central part of all instinctive mental processes. The complete mental process, as we have already seen, consists of first becoming aware of a stimulating object and finally acting somehow towards it in a way innately determined. Between the cognitive and conative activities is a central part, the affective. The cognitive and conative activities admit of very great modifications not only in individuals but between one man and another, but the affective part is common to all men and remains uncontrollable and unchanging in the individual. Fear, for example, causes different men to act differently and men are made afraid by the perception of different objects, and the same individual may be frightened by different objects at different stages of his career; but the central thing, the feeling of fear is everywhere and always the same in

## INSTINCT AND EMOTION

quality.<sup>1</sup> Every instinct has a central part, which may be called its accompanying emotion, with a peculiar quality of its own. These are the primary emotions, and McDougall has sifted out of the vast range of our emotional experience those which seem to be irreducible to anything else or to one another, and tabulates the primary emotions and the instincts from which they are derived in parallel columns thus:<sup>2</sup>

<i>Instinct.</i>	<i>Emotion accompanying the Instinctive Activity.</i>
1 Escape (self-preservation, avoidance, danger instinct)	1 Fear (terror, fright, alarm, etc.)

<sup>1</sup> This cannot of course be proved, and is only an inference from experience, but there seems no reason to doubt it. Even Siegfried ultimately knew what fear was ; the cognitive part of the instinct was not stimulated by the perception of Fafnir in his case as it would have been in that of most of us, nor was the resulting conation the same in him as it would have been in me (I should never have stood up to the dragon like that), and again many of us could have gazed upon Brunhilde if not without emotion yet without the emotion of fear ; yet there seems to be no doubt that the central affective part of his experience was fear, the common human emotion we all know sooner or later. So that McDougall's doctrine holds even in the somewhat abnormal case of Siegfried.

<sup>2</sup> In *Social Psychology* he gives two criteria for the primacy of an emotion :

1 If a similar motion is found among the higher animals

2 If it is found morbidly exaggerated in pathological cases. This list, which I quote from his most recent work, *Outline of Psychology*, p. 324, is not quite the same as the list he gives in *Social Psychology*. It is not necessary to the acceptability of his general theory that every emotion ever experienced by man should at this stage of our knowledge be assigned once and for all to a definite place in this or any other list, or in some doubtful cases be rigidly classed with the primary or with the derived emotions.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

### *Instinct.*

- 2 Combat (aggression, pugnacity)
- 3 Repulsion.
- 4 Parental (protective)
- 5 Appeal.
- 6 Pairing (reproduction, sexual)
  
- 7 Curiosity (inquiry, investigation)
- 8 Submission (self-abasement)
- 9 Assertion (self-display)
  
- 10 Social or gregarious instinct)
- 11 Food-seeking (hunting)
- 12 Acquisition (hoarding)
- 13 Construction.
- 14 Laughter.

### *Emotion accompanying the Instinctive Activity.*

- 2 Anger (rage, irritation, displeasure)
- 3 Disgust (repugnance)
- 4 Tender emotion (love)
- 5 Distress.
- 6 Lust (sexual emotion or excitement, sometimes called love—an unfortunate and confusing usage)
- 7 Curiosity (wonder)
  
- 8 Negative self-feeling, humility.
- 9 Positive self-feeling, elation.
- 10 Feeling of loneliness, nostalgia.
- 11 Appetite or craving in narrower sense, gusto.
- 12 Feeling of ownership, of possession.
- 13 Feeling of creativeness, productivity.
- 14 Amusement (jollity, relaxation).

But the complexity of the experience of the civilized adult is such that he rarely experiences any of these crude emotions in a pure form: far more frequently two or more emotions are

## BLENDING OF THE EMOTIONS

aroused simultaneously and blend to form secondary and tertiary emotions. As an example of a binary compound he gives scorn, which is the mixture of *disgust* and *anger*. Add positive self-feeling to *scorn* and we get contempt. In a similar way he accounts for *admiration* as the mixture of *wonder* and *submission*, for awe as admiration plus fear ("admiration is a binary, awe a tertiary compound"). Add gratitude to awe and we get reverence. Gratitude is itself a compound of tender emotion and negative self-feeling (*submission*). Fear plus disgust is loathing; add wonder and we get fascination.

This account of the origin and nature of emotion as we experience it in ordinary life is but a rough summary: it is necessary to add that these primary and derived emotions are blended with one another and modified in a hundred ways.<sup>1</sup> They are however but the raw material of our emotional life, which would be at the level of the animals if we felt and behaved according as the fleeting stimulus of the moment aroused first one and then another of these instinctive

<sup>1</sup> The reader is referred to his *Social Psychology* for an indication of some of these modifications. See especially pp. 128 sq.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

emotions and their derivatives. The mind of civilized man is more highly organized than this, for the evanescence of emotion is one of its most noteworthy characteristics.<sup>1</sup> While any feeling of fear, anger or more subtly compounded emotion is at once the chief motive of action and the standard of value by which all behaviour, both of the subject himself and of others, is judged while it lasts, its duration is limited. One may blaze with anger for five minutes, remain in a state of bad temper for an hour after an outburst, but a day wears away all but a thin substratum of the most intense emotion.<sup>2</sup>

It will, however, be objected that some motives of instinctive or emotional origin sometimes dominate conduct for years or even a lifetime—

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ribot. "It is a phenomenon of sudden appearance and limited duration." It might be well to quote the rest of his definition. "Emotion is in the order of feeling the equivalent of perception in the intellectual order, a complex synthetic state essentially made up of produced or arrested movements of organic modifications (in circulation, respiration, etc.), of an agreeable or painful or mixed state of consciousness peculiar to each emotion."

<sup>2</sup> In this crude analysis I have omitted the intermediate mental processes which depend on circumstances, whether e.g. in the case of anger the emotion is vented on the offender in which case the transient character of the emotion is even more apparent; or whether in cases where no conation is immediately involved the crude emotion brings into operation a sentiment like justice, which ultimately satisfies the instinct in the indirect form of punishment. The point is that not only is our whole emotional life varying from moment to moment, but any particular emotion which may be dominant for an appreciable period varies in intensity and in a short time is replaced by another.

## THE COMPLEX

stories of revenge offer more striking examples of what happens in the experience of everyone. This kind of emotional permanence is explained by the doctrine of the "sentiments",<sup>1</sup> according to which our emotions tend to organize themselves about the various objects which excite them. The word 'complex' is sometimes applied to these systems of associated mental elements which are bound together by emotional ties. Psychologists have not yet made up their minds whether the term 'complex' should be restricted to pathological 'sentiments',<sup>2</sup> but the fact is now universally recognized, and can be verified by anyone who observes at all carefully the behaviour of his fellow men, that the mind does organize its experiences into systems which are unified by common affect (feeling) in such a way that, if one of the elements is stimulated, the whole system is called into activity. A musical example will make this clear. By the way a very strong German complex in which many of the strongest primary emotions—fear,

<sup>1</sup> Enunciated by Ribot, *Psychologie des Sentiments*, and elaborated by Shand, *Foundations of Character*, and McDougall, *Social Psychology*.

<sup>2</sup> They held a symposium about it not long ago in the winter of 1922-3.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

anger, aggression, gregariousness—provided the affective bonds, was organized in the minds of most Englishmen, with the result that many musical people, who couldn't deny the greatness of Beethoven and Wagner, said quite openly that while they didn't wish to say anything against the quality of the music they didn't want to hear it just now; in the case of Strauss they went further, and not only would not listen to him, but saw in the fact of his writing for an orchestra of some size the megalomania of the Kaiser; while purists who previously condemned the use of any song translations could no longer bear to hear their Schubert and Brahms in German. Any German association tended to rouse the whole complex into activity with its accompanying emotion of strong repugnance. It is from 'sentiments' or 'complexes' of this kind, though they are not always so highly charged with strong affect, that most of the emotions of ordinary experience are derived. Sometimes an instinct may be aroused pure and its corresponding pure emotion experienced, but much more frequently our feelings are blends

## “PURELY MUSICAL EMOTION”

of several instinctive emotions or derived from sentiments. In any case the ultimate source of any emotion must always be sought among the instincts.

It is the difficulty of finding adequate origins in instinct that compels us to reject the hypothesis of a purely musical emotion. For either we have to postulate a purely musical instinct or to show that we have a music sentiment capable of yielding the rich emotional content revealed in the works of composers and experienced by the listener. The objections to postulating a primary instinct for music are numerous, independently of the biological objections. First, there is the wide recognition already noticed that whatever the nature of musical satisfaction may be, it is the same in essence as that derived from the other arts. If we postulate an instinct for art we shall be driven to do the same for religion, scientific enquiry and conscience<sup>1</sup>—which seems to be untidy and uneconomical thinking. Further, as we shall see, there are elements of several

<sup>1</sup> The late Dean Rashdall and Prof. McDougall recently carried on a considerable controversy in the Hibbert Journal on a point closely akin to this.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

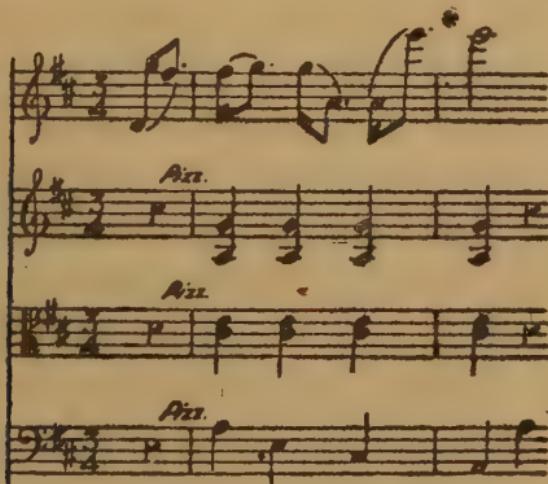
other instincts embedded in aesthetic experience, so that it cannot be one of the primary instincts. Then again the emotion yielded by a primary instinct is a single feeling of peculiar quality (cf. Ribot's definition p. 66), and it would be difficult to regard the content of a funeral march and a scherzo as producing the same single peculiar effect on the listener. If we admit a whole series of emotions peculiar to music (as Dr. Brown<sup>1</sup>), we have but added to our difficulties, for we can give no account of them or of their origin. The most hopeful source of a purely musical emotion is the sense of rhythm. 'Sense' of rhythm I say, but it has some claims to be called an instinct. Rhythm is undoubtedly innate, and not only an innate faculty (i.e. akin to other forms of apprehension) but possessing considerable dynamic powers, which bring it very nearly into the realm of emotion (Wundt indeed calls it an emotion). A rhythmic movement like drumming with one's heels seems to produce a purely rhythmic pleasure of an

<sup>1</sup> *The Quest* 1912, where he states (but does not argue) that "Music expresses an emotional life peculiar to itself. The emotions represented are not the emotions of everyday life, nor are they even idealized forms of these emotions."

## EMOTION IN RHYTHM

emotional character, but it may also produce a whole series of ordinary emotions ranging from stupor to frenzy. In any case whether it be an emotion or a sense—the sense by which we apprehend time—and however large a part it plays in musical satisfaction,<sup>1</sup> we are hardly

<sup>1</sup> Not long ago I heard the Hungarian String Quartet play Mozart's D minor quartet, in which the Trio of the Minuet contains this passage :



At the asterisk they made a hardly appreciable pause, the very smallest possible hold-up of the rhythm. The effect was electrifying, and woke me from a semi-bored stupor to which a previous quartet had reduced me, to a most intense feeling of pleasure and awakeness, and I remember that I started up in my chair. This experience had all the marks of emotion and fitted Ribot's definition in every respect, including an organic disturbance in the region of the spine, the motor discharge involved in my sudden change of position and the unique pleasurable feeling-tone. In asking myself subsequently what this emotion was I could find for it nothing but a purely rhythmic content. But I do not wholeheartedly accept even a purely rhythmic emotion. I hesitate to appeal to symbolism, by arguing that the rhythmic

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

entitled to explain the emotional significance solely in terms of rhythm and take no account of the great powers of emotional expression possessed by other elements in music, melody, harmony, design and tone-colour. The whole is greater than the part.<sup>1</sup>

But if we have no aesthetic instinct it is certain that we have an aesthetic sentiment. M. Ribot in ch. X of his classic work on the emotions expresses the origin and traces the evolution of our aesthetic sentiment. He accepts the true origin of art as lying in the play impulse, and is emphatic that there is a purely instinctive element. "This X," he writes, speaking of the *proprium quid* of creative work, "which for want of a better term we may call spontaneity, is of the nature of an instinct. It is a craving to create, equivalent in the intellectual order to

emotion is a symbol of some other emotion. I do, however, regard this as the most serious objection to my view of the nature of art (as the expression of ordinary emotion). It might be possible to meet it by putting forward a hypothesis of "undifferentiated emotion" corresponding to "free libido" which appears to introspection merely as "excitement". But I don't know.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. George Dyson goes so far as to declare that music in origin is melodic not rhythmic, and that rhythm only came into music with its absorption of dance forms. But this rigid antithesis of melodic and rhythmic quality gives me more support than I care to accept.

## THE AESTHETIC SENTIMENT

the generative craving in the physiological order." And from this germ he traces the evolution of the sentiment through dancing, (which is muscular play), and ornament (which has a social value), to the anthropomorphic stage where art is freed from a merely human reference and man is enabled to derive aesthetic pleasure from the natural beauty of scenery (a late development for which there seems to have been no taste even in classical times), till finally he can talk of 'Art for Art's sake'. Some such analysis must be accepted of the origin of the pleasure which we derive from the contemplation of beauty (whether of Nature, art or anything else). This particular emotion is present in any artistic activity. A singer or conductor for example if asked to register the emotional content of his consciousness at the actual moment of performing a work will be most aware of a sense of power or impotence in "getting it over", whether he has gripped his audience, whether he is obtaining this nuance from his instrument and so on; in fact the dominant emotion is that derived from the instinct of construction and is

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

identical in kind with that of a potter shaping his vessel, of a schoolboy solving an algebraical problem, of a chemist at the critical moment of his experiment, or of anyone engaged in anything which is 'coming right' or 'going wrong'. But this emotion is plainly not that which inspired the composer to write, though it will dominate his mind perhaps during the labour-pains of composition, and it is certainly not what the listener feels. It is neither a purely musical emotion nor is it the emotional content of a work of art. The emotions of the listener give one a valuable clue, for though he feels foreboding at Zamiel's syncopated drum-taps in *Der Freischutz*, rapture in the last movement of the Ninth Symphony, and terror in Holst's *Mars*, yet it is not quite the same foreboding that he experiences at receiving a summons to a fateful interview or the terror of actual warfare. Something happens to the emotion which makes it different, though leaving it the same emotion. This something is Wordsworth's "remembering in tranquillity". It is the essence of art, like the essential meaning of a thing crystallized in

## HOW LISTENERS DIFFER

a concept. The emotion is caught up by an act of intuition.

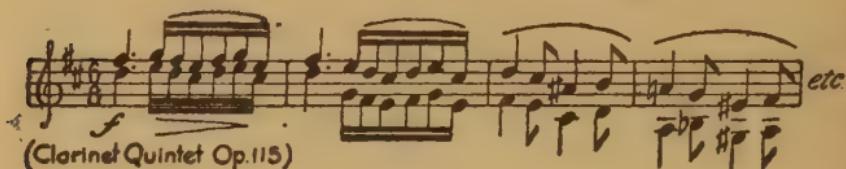
The difficulty of this view for music is the indefiniteness of the emotion as seen by introspection and the great variation in the emotion produced in or suggested to different minds. The *Andante* of a string quartet may suggest to one the tranquillity of the sea at Margate on a summer morning, to another the tranquillity of religious resignation, to a third the quiet satisfaction of a piece of work well done, while the composer if pressed for the impulse which begot the work may say that it was some charming idyll which he read in a book of short stories. This very serious difficulty is robbed of its worst terrors by Ribot's doctrine of emotional memory and by a consideration, universally recognized, of the complexity and variation in human character.

Let us see how all this works.

It is to deliver myself into the hands of the enemy and to commit the unforgivable sin. But for the argument's sake let me take a musical example and imagine a not impossible (I hope)

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

programme for it. Brahms towards the end of his life wrote



Taking this movement in connection with what we know, both from his music and his biography, of his life, thought, tastes and character, we may interpret it as an expression of that passionate longing, which for some natures is specially apt to arise at the contemplation of great natural beauty, to seize upon life, to stop the flow of time,<sup>1</sup> and with a side-glance at Death to eternalize the transient. There is no one name for a complex emotion of this kind, and its quality is so subtle as to be inexpressible save in music—words will not do it.<sup>2</sup> Not every human being

<sup>1</sup> This element is present, I think, in some degree in all big art, but in this work it is very strong.

<sup>2</sup> But it can be analysed and its instinctive origins indicated. First the great natural instinct of preservation of the self combined with, strange as it may seem, negative self-feeling, then some sort of gratitude to the Creator in which tender emotion and negative self-feeling are blended; to these must be added an element of wonder and perhaps a small amount of joy and sadness, both complex emotional states. The bracing element which becomes more prominent in the second subject is derived from the self-regarding sentiment.

## HOW PERFORMERS DIFFER

will feel the mingled wistfulness and gratitude of it (extroverts probably will not), and those who do feel it will feel the mingled emotional elements in different degrees of strength according to their intellectual faith, their emotional sensitiveness, even their physical sensitiveness to sun and air, in a word, according to their personality. Hence it comes about that any two violinists playing this work may take this theme a shade faster or slower, and while they can hardly fail to feel its wistfulness may interpret it in a different sense from that given by two other violinists. And it also comes about that while we can all write strings of thirds and sixths, they won't be what Brahms wrote because we are not Brahms and have not the precise blend of intellectual, emotional, moral and other traits that Brahms had. Further a similar emotional stimulus would react differently on Bach or Mozart or Holst.<sup>1</sup> These are commonplaces

<sup>1</sup> I had a very good illustration of this at an orchestral concert at which Dvorak's Violin Concerto and Mozart's Horn Concerto were played on the same evening. The last movements of both works seemed to me to express the same feeling of light-hearted gaiety. The sameness was easily recognizable though it passed through the medium of the personality of a passionate Czech on the one hand and of a mercurial Viennese on the other.

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

admitted widely enough, but not always realized at their full value. They would certainly be difficult to maintain and account for on Hanslick's theory of "arabesques sonores".

It seems safe to assume that all humans are equipped with the same instincts from which emotion is ultimately derived, and that we can all experience all the emotions—Mr. Holst says that musicians are expressing in sound what all men feel; and yet within this fundamental sameness there is the enormous divergence which we have just noted. When we come to the divergence of interpretation given by those who listen to the Clarinet Quintet or to our imaginary tranquil Andante, how shall we reconcile the summer morning at Margate with religious resignation? By M. Ribot's theory of emotional memory; which claims that emotional states divested of all their accompanying circumstances can leave behind them a memory of themselves. Alongside of ordinary intellectual memory is this affective memory in which the feeling of love, fear or disappointment is separated from its causes on the various occasions on which it

## EMOTIONAL MEMORY

was experienced, and is in a sense an *abstract emotion*, analogous to an abstract idea (or concept). Now the motion of music arouses general or abstract emotional states (an abstract of tranquillity in our example) and through them by means of association and a kind of emotional reverberation, calls up in each hearer his own particular images and ideas which have once formed the settings of such emotional states in each individual's experience.<sup>1</sup> Confirmation is found for this doctrine in the close connection between emotion, bodily movement and the movement of music. Thus M. Combarieu who rejects the idea that musical composition is emotional memory claims for his own doctrine<sup>2</sup> what he calls "le dynamisme de la vie passionnelle". "Directement, la musique ne peut traduire aucun sentiment déterminé" he says [which is precisely what I argue it does do]; mais, de la vie psychique elle traduit l'intensité, le dynamisme intérieur et

<sup>1</sup> M. Combarieu's criticism of this doctrine in *La Musique, ses Lois, son Evolution* is directed not against its explanation of differing interpretations, but against the view that the subject-matter of music is these abstract emotions. My view is that the composer is expressing a definite emotional state which may, it is true, have more than one root in his total past experience, and so far be a generalized emotion, but which is essentially a programme felt at a definite moment.

<sup>2</sup> "La Musique est l'art de penser avec des sons sans concepts."

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

général avec tous ses degrés . . . elle néglige les representations et les concepts qui accompagnent l'état affectif; n'en retient que l'énergie . . . Elle est pour ainsi dire le dynamomètre de la vie sentimentale." The same idea appears in H. J. Watt's *Foundations of Music*. "Melody" he says "is the *motional* connection between tones, and with all its means of variation (rhythm, speed, pitch, etc.) it is only necessary to bring the motions of music into some sort of correspondence with the character of the acts and energies of man for it to be able to express his soul's life." Music is a form of motion, non-spatial but temporal. On the other side the connection of emotional states with bodily movements has been emerging more and more clearly in psychology. James's topsy-turvy doctrine of the emotions<sup>1</sup> is only an overstatement of the accepted view that it is incipient conation. The two words 'motion' and 'emotion' significantly have a number of their letters in common. No one can deny motion to music, however much he may wish to keep it free from e-motion.

<sup>1</sup> For which see Essay V, p. 148.

## MOTION AND EMOTION

Motion will thus express the ebb and flow of psychic energy; an emotional state of whatever sort—whether, as Ribot says, it be the feelings that arise from neuralgia or the grief expressed by Michael Angelo in his Sonnets—reduces itself to a heightening or depression of the energy of the organism. The motions of music will then express the composer's emotions and awaken those of his audience, and just as every individual listener has a different idea of the concept 'dog' according to his individual experience of particular dogs, so will his emotion of tranquillity be different according to the different circumstances (at Margate or in a cathedral) in which he has experienced tranquillity and to the individual make-up of his own character.

An objection which a doctrine such as the one here put forward has to meet is the phenomenon of the prodigy, which has occurred so frequently in the history of music. If character and emotional experience are the vital essence of music how can the music of a very young man, a Mozart or a Mendelssohn or a Schubert,

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

have the worth which a great deal of this 'young' work undeniably has? It is hard to give a complete answer, but two things may be borne in mind. First, instinct is a natural endowment and may develop young, so that the chief ingredient, emotional susceptibility, is given, just as exceptional intellectual ability is a gift of Nature and may put forth its powers early; any theory, except perhaps Hanslick's formalism, must take so much for granted. Second, though it is easy to make a list of youthful geniuses who have given birth to full-grown works of art, an equally if not more imposing list may be made of composers who like Beethoven and Wagner have only produced their greatest work in maturity after deep experience of life. We shall never explain why some men are more gifted than others, nor why one man's gift runs to making those flying leaps which we call creation in the field of chemistry and another's in the field of periodic sound vibrations. But that need not discourage us from examining the fruits of the gift, nor invalidate its analysis. Let us look the difficulty boldly in the face and pass by.

## INTUITION

Emotion then is the impulse which sets the creative instinct at work and is the subject-matter of the communication that the creator gives to the world. In the process of giving it he crystallizes it, putting into permanent form something that as it occurs is of brief duration. How does he do it? What is the nature of the crystallizing process? Modern opinion in the main follows Croce in declaring it to be an act of intuition, i.e. it is a process of cognition and the work of the intellect. Lascelles Abercrombie pursues the implications of this and says that beauty is not a quality of things but an intuition or judgement passed on experience, and the work of art is the expression of the complete experience, which includes the value it has for the mind which experiences it.<sup>1</sup> He further holds, as Croce does not, that an essential attribute of art is that it is communication or publication

<sup>1</sup> *Essay towards a Theory of Art*, p. 50: "When we say that art consists of the expression of experience we mean the expression of *whole* experience: both of the substance which the world contributes by being experienced and simultaneously of the value which the mind contributes." The reader is referred to the earlier chapters of this work on 'aesthetic experience' which is the raw material of art, because Abercrombie might deny that this was the same thing as the emotional experience for which I argue. 'Face value' is his test for aesthetic experience. But must not even 'face value' satisfy some instinct?

## EMOTION IN MUSIC

to others of a complete experience ('complete' again = 'complete with values'), and for purposes of communication the expression must be external; and since an intuition, if it is to be communicated, must take the form of a judgement we are justified in saying that the intuition of art is a judgement of value.

The use of the word "judgement" in this extended sense may seem unwarrantable. In Logic a judgement has the form of a proposition of which one can say that it is either true or false. Even in a matter of taste where it is impossible for anyone to say definitively "This is good" or "This is beautiful" because someone else with equal weight of argument or authority may say the opposite, and where there is no means of establishing its absolute truth as in mathematics, *formally* this judgement of value is susceptible of being described as true or untrue. A work of art, such as a Beethoven sonata, on the other hand, cannot have truth or falsehood predicated of it. Yet I have described it as a judgement of value. I do so for the same sort of reason as enabled Aristotle to regard an action as the

## ART AS JUDGEMENT

conclusion of a practical syllogism. The fundamental act of mind which is the same in the categories of morality, truth, and beauty, is an intuition; and just as an intuition of morality may either take the form of a judgement "This is good" or the form of an action, so in the sphere of aesthetic it may take the form of a critical judgement "This is fine" or of a work of art where the content is much richer. I keep the term "judgement" because in the first place it implies some elaboration of the crude intuition into a presentable form and in the second place because "judgement of value" is a complete phrase which describes immediately the class of phenomena to which I assign works of art.

Art, of course, is not concerned with facts or statements and can make no existential judgements; its subject-matter is value, and experience only has value in so far as it appeals to and satisfies our emotions. For the emotions, rooted though they are in instinct, are the finest flower of human evolution without which reason itself is barren and may become evil. And it is the highest in man with which the masterpieces of music deal.

## IV

### RHYTHM

IT is not too much to say that Rhythm is the vital principle of music. Sound is its body and Form its skeleton, but it is Rhythm that gives the body life. It is not necessary therefore to insist on its importance, which is recognized by most performers and teachers of music. But it presents two distinct difficulties to musicians: one is the practical problem of infusing the vitality of rhythm into the performance of any piece of music—this is the artist's secret and comes to him more or less intuitively by revelation; the other is the critical difficulty of knowing really and precisely what this mysterious property of art is and so of talking sense about it. Rhythm is not confined to the art of music, but runs through the other time-arts, and according to some critics' use of the word through the space-arts as well; and it is also found in some regions of

## THE SCIENTIFIC APPROACH

human experience which have little connection with art. This confounds the confusion of the word still further. It is not always desirable to insist on definitions, but our uses of the word 'rhythm', even when it is confined to music, are so loose and so varied that it will be advantageous to know what the essence of the thing really is. This fortunately is possible by an appeal to psychology. We can put aside all our preconceptions about it and approach it scientifically, for rhythm is one of the properties of our minds which have been submitted to laboratory experiment.

Suppose you rap with your knuckles on the table something of this kind:



you will not be able to count the number of strokes; but if you do the same thing again, you will know infallibly that the second series of taps was an exact reproduction of the first both as to the length of time occupied by the taps, their number, and their arrangement among

## RHYTHM

themselves. You know this not by any process of reasoning, as you would do if you knew by counting how many strokes there were, but by a direct perception, which is almost of the nature of a sixth sense (over and above the sense of hearing by which the strokes of sound are conveyed to the mind). This is an innate faculty for apprehending time and is called a sense of rhythm. It is a sense that only works at all accurately within very narrow limits, though certain things like anniversaries have some rhythmic significance—i.e. the mind can roughly feel the periodic recurrence of a point of time even with so long an interval. Owing to the fact that this time-sense has so limited a scope we can only think of time symbolically, i.e. by translating it into terms of number or space: an hour is measured by hands on a dial—we all know how it varies in length according as we are busy or bored. But within its limits our sense of rhythm is very accurate, or can be made so with comparatively little cultivation. The most successful experiments on the sense of rhythm have been made with sound, though

## A LABORATORY EXPERIMENT

flashes of light have also been used. Of these the one which illuminates most clearly the real nature of rhythm was conducted by Dr. Bolton in America, thirty years ago.<sup>1</sup>

### *BOLTON'S EXPERIMENT*

There were two main objects of this experiment: the first and most important was to ascertain what the mind did with a series of simple auditory impressions (sounds) in which there was absolutely no change of intensity, pitch, quality or time-interval; the other object was to find out what value for organizing such a series of sounds so that it could be grasped as a rhythmic unit, regular variations in intensity or time-interval have. To ensure absolute uniformity in sound and interval an electric apparatus was constructed which emitted clicks like a telephone. The rate of the clicks could be varied by the operator, however, and every subject was tried with several different rates. The subjects, over fifty in number, were people of all kinds and they

<sup>1</sup> See *American Journal of Psychology*, January 1894.

## RHYTHM

were not told anything about the objects of the experiment. They were just invited to be seated, to listen and to make any comments of any sort they liked. A number of them noticed an apparent change in the intensity of the sounds and commenced to group the clicks into twos and fours; generally, however, it required some kind of suggestion to direct the attention of the subject to the grouping of the sounds. These suggestions were made indirectly if possible, e.g. if the subject had remarked that it was like a clock he was asked whether there was the difference in quality (tick-tock) that is apparent in the ticking of a clock. In some cases it was noticed that the subject was unconsciously keeping time by moving a muscle, the foot or in one case the eyelid, and he was asked why he was doing it. This drew his attention to the fact that he was grouping the sounds. In the end it was found that all the subjects except two, who were both utterly unmusical, made groupings of those monotonous sounds, i.e. accented every second, third or fourth tick, which in reality was no stronger than any of the

## ORGANIZATION OF SOUNDS

unaccented ticks. This means that our rhythmic sense organizes any series of monotonous sounds by breaking them up into organic groups, consisting of a strong accent with weak ones attached to and belonging to it. And each group seems to be separated from its neighbour by an apparently longer interval than separates the individual clicks. This organizing of strokes of sound into separate and recognisable groups was what we tested when we rapped on the table the rhythm given on p. 87, only in that case the sounds were by no means monotonous but already organized by us; and it can be readily understood how much stronger is the hold on the mind when the group is presented to it ready organized. This is what the artist has to do with his rhythms, whether he works in poetry, dancing or music.

Of the two subjects who resisted all suggestions of grouping Bolton gives the following account:

*Subject 18.* Time rate of .325 seconds per click. This was a very pleasant rate. Other rates seemed too slow or too fast. By no suggestion

## RHYTHM

could any kind of grouping of the sounds be effected. The subject declared they were all uniform in intensity. The subject had no musical talent and no interest in music.

*Subject 30.* No musical talent. Time rate .268 secs. By no suggestion was it possible for the subject to effect any kind of grouping of the sounds, which appeared as a dead monotonous series and suggested a pile-driver.

These were the only two out of more than fifty who made no groupings, but it was noted that in general, younger and less educated subjects yielded more easily and quickly to the suggestion of a rhythmical grouping. The general conclusions of the experiment he states as follows:

“A given number of auditory impressions within certain time-limits, when presented in such a way that there is a kind of subordination among them with respect either to time, intensity, pitch or quality, or with respect to any two or more of these properties, always stand as a unit in consciousness. They form an organic unity, which is the essential condition of a number of

## BOLTON'S CONCLUSIONS

impressions entering into a state of consciousness. If such organic unity does not exist and it is possible to make it, *the mind imposes* such an arrangement upon a given number of the elements that they may enter into a state of consciousness. The essential condition of forming such a unity among sounds is a regular temporal sequence within the limits (1.0 sec. and 0.1 sec.)<sup>1</sup> and perfect uniformity in intensity, pitch and quality." That is, if there is a gap of more than 1 second between each stroke of sound, and the sounds are quite monotonous, we shall not be able to group them nor feel them as anything but unrelated noises. If, however, the sounds are not monotonous, but there is present some organization by means of accent or variation in pitch or duration, we shall the more easily grasp them as a rhythm and longer time periods can be grasped as units.<sup>2</sup> "Regular variations", he says, "within limits with respect to intensity, pitch or quality, or to any two, or to all of these together, will effect a subordination among them sufficient

<sup>1</sup> McEwen, *The Thought in Music*, gives 2 seconds for the upper limit. Where does he get it from? There is a chapter in this book dealing fairly fully with the psychological basis of rhythm.

<sup>2</sup> See below, p. 100.

## RHYTHM

to constitute an organic unity. There is a temporal limit within which these variations must occur in order to form such a unity . . . In a series of auditory impressions any regular recurrent impression which is different from the rest, subordinates the other impressions to it in such a way that they fall together in groups. If the recurrent difference is one of intensity (louder), the stronger impression comes first in the group and the weaker ones after. If the recurrent difference is one of duration, the longest impression comes last."

From this, then, it appears that rhythm implies two things: periodicity of the sound (or movement) and some organizing principle which we may call 'stress'. Stress itself may be of three kinds: an increase of intensity, duration, or pitch, or two or all three of them together; and experiments have been made to compare their efficacy in producing a rhythm. Pitch, for example, was found to give equivocal results when it was used as the sole determinant of a rhythm; some individuals heard the high tones as the more intense, others the low, while to some

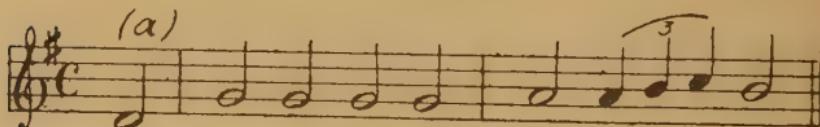
## PITCH

highness and lowness were indifferent. But both in speech and in melody pitch may act as an intensifier of whatever is marking the rhythm. If, for example, one says "Really?" in tones of incredulity one pronounces the 'e' strongly on a sound of low pitch, and if one says "Really!" in outraged astonishment the 'e' is again accented but on a tone of high pitch; and in a melody the climax will often come on a high note which will generally be found to be on a strong accent. Pitch then may be a substitute for or a further intensification of intensity, but by itself can hardly be said to determine a rhythm. In speech duration and accent vary a great deal from language to language in the part each plays in determining rhythm, but in music the primary rhythm is, nowadays at least, determined by accent.<sup>1</sup> An interesting experiment, however, was carried out on a harmonium, where accent was impossible, which showed that in the absence of accent, duration is called in as the organizing principle. Attached to the keys of the instrument were suitable electric contacts which regis-

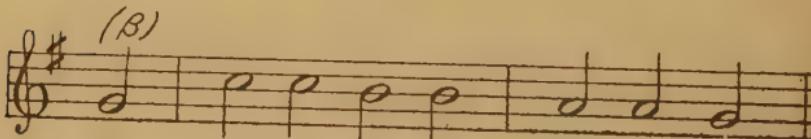
<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lascelles Abercrombie, *Principles of English Prosody*, Part I, p. 20, where he practically says the same thing as applied to poetry.

## RHYTHM

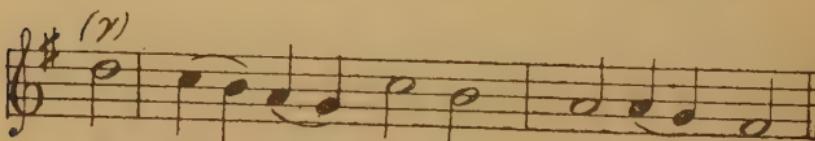
tered in hundredths of a second the length of time during which each key was depressed. Four different organists were asked to play over



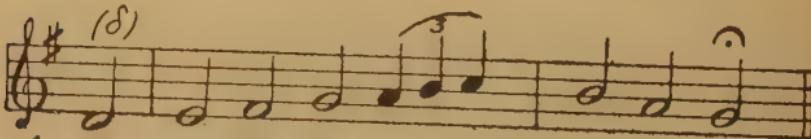
A.	84	90	87	90	81	90	21	28	30	90
B.	91	96	91	95	89	84	25	24	40	89
C.	83	78	70	73	66	77	23	25	26	72
D.	68	73	67	72	65	74	19	20	28	71



A.	85	93	76	97	82	84	79	81
B.	86	93	89	96	85	92	84	201
C.	71	76	69	77	70	75	70	75
D.	73	73	68	73	65	73	68	76



A.	88	38	42	39	48	85	87	90	40	39	89
B.	88	46	44	43	45	95	94	94	42	42	91
C.	73	39	36	38	39	74	71	73	35	33	73
D.	70	36	34	34	35	70	68	66	34	35	71



A.	90	88	80	85	22	27	31	90	90	154
B.	98	91	97	94	27	25	41	96	94	194
C.	75	75	71	69	27	29	28	77	80	87
D.	71	71	74	67	22	22	29	70	76	177

## THE HARMONIUM EXPERIMENT

five hymns, and it was found that the strong beats of the bars received more time than the weak, and that "equal" notes were very far from having equal duration. For the test quoted opposite only the air was played, but when the hymn was played over with all parts no greater accuracy was found.

Psychologically the experiment is decisive: duration is capable by itself of determining a rhythm. Musically all sorts of interesting things appear:<sup>1</sup> note

- (1) the difficulty of playing even triplets;  
C's are much the best,
- (2) how in the crotchet passage (stanza γ) all performers agree in making the last of the four crotchets a stronger note than the third, and second in importance to the strong first crotchet,
- (3) the great variation that is possible in the treatment of the anacrusis (the beginning of each stanza), C treating each one differently (observe how he makes an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mr. R. O. Morris's *Contrapuntal Technique in Sixteenth Century*, Chapter III, esp. p. 19 for the musical consequences of "agogic" accents.

## RHYTHM

“organist’s start” with a long first note, but at the second anacrusis stresses the second note, while at the last stanza he gives both notes an equal duration of 75),

(4) the enormous possibilities of giving an individual interpretation to any piece of music merely by the relative durations of the notes. In this example B is the most erratic performer, and must be adjudged, seeing that this is a hymn-tune, easily the worst: his triplets are a disgrace, though he atones for this to some extent by the evenness of his crotchets. But he has a curious trick of dwelling on the third beats of the bar, (note the B in bar 1 of stanza  $\beta$  and the G of bar 1 in stanza  $\delta$ ; also note that he makes a half-way pause at the end of stanza  $\beta$ ).

It would be interesting to see how cross rhythms came out on this instrument and to observe the inner construction in terms of number of a bar of  $\frac{5}{4}$  time.

## THE UNIT OF TIME

A propos of  $\frac{5}{4}$  time, explanations which regard it as alternations of groups of two and groups of three would seem to be if not definitely wrong, at any rate superfluous and improbable. Experiment has shown that the condition of a rhythm being perceived is that the mind shall grasp a time period as a unit, and that the time periods shall all be equal—periodicity, i.e., is the essence of the rhythm. This is not to deny the possibility of having two standard-units in one's mind and attending to each alternately, but in practice the mind easily and naturally integrates them into a bigger unit unless the rate is very slow. There is experimental evidence for this, and as it also gives us interesting information about the length of time which we apprehend as the present moment, it is worth quoting in full.<sup>1</sup> It arises out of the point from which we set out—the inability of our minds to comprehend time directly without recourse to symbolism of one sort or another, such as counting or spaces on a dial. It shows that we can only directly and immediately apprehend the present moment, and

<sup>1</sup> W. James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I, p. 612.

## RHYTHM

it goes on to ascertain how long the present moment is:

“ Hearing is the sense by which the subdivision of duration is most sharply made. Almost all experiments on the time sense have been done by means of strokes of sound. How long a series of sounds then can we group in the mind so as not to confound it with a longer or shorter series? Our spontaneous tendency is to break up any monotonously-given series of sounds into some sort of rhythm [Cf. Bolton’s Experiment]. We involuntarily accentuate every second, third or fourth beat, and we break the series in still more intricate ways. Whenever we thus group the impressions in rhythmic form, we can identify a longer string of them without confusion. Wundt found that 12 impressions could be distinguished clearly as a united cluster, provided they were caught in a certain rhythm of the mind [i.e. that the group was felt to have a certain internal organization] and succeeded each other at intervals not smaller than .3 and not larger than .5 sec.

## THE PRESENT MOMENT

(This makes the total time distinctly apprehended to be anything from 3.6 to 6 secs.) Dietze (a disciple of Wundt) gives larger figures. The most favourable intervals for clearly catching the strokes were when they came at from .3 to .18 secs. apart. 40 strokes might then be remarked as a whole and identified without error when repeated, provided the mind grasped them in 5 sub-groups of 8, or 8 sub-groups of 5 each. This would make  $40 \times .3$  secs. = 12 secs. to be the maximum filled duration of which we can be both distinctly and immediately aware; i.e. the present moment is at most 12 secs. long, at least it is about  $\frac{1}{500}$  sec.<sup>1</sup> Counting was of course not permitted. It would have given a symbolic concept and no intuitive or immediate perception of the totality of the series. With counting we may, of course, compare together series of any length—series whose beginnings have faded from our minds and of whose totality we retain no sensible at all."

<sup>1</sup> This lower limit was determined by Exner, who recognized two electric sparks as successive when the second followed the first at that interval.

## RHYTHM

It is plain from these experiments that pace is the all-important factor which determines how the grouping shall be made, but it is also clear that any grouping so made is a unit and can be apprehended as such and that 5 strokes of sound will form a group as readily as 2 or 3. The number in fact has nothing to do with it. The experiment with the horrible version of Tallis's Canon already quoted shows that a rhythm of four pulses is not the same thing as a rhythm of two pulses taken twice. Inside the predominating time-period which in this case is the bar of four minims the organization is strong, medium weak, medium strong, weak, not a simple alternation of strong and weak. That pace and not the internal organization of the bar (the rhythmic unit in music) determines how much time shall be grasped by the mind as the unit was shown by Bolton's experiment, where variations in the rate of the clicks caused variations in the grouping. But it also appears very clearly in any piece of music in  $\frac{6}{8}$  time. There is a version of the carol *In Dulci Jubilo* which is called *Good Christian men, rejoice.* It is one of the most

## THE INFLUENCE OF PACE

striking examples of the blind bad taste of Victorian church musicians, but nothing could be more apt to our present purpose or show more clearly the mind integrating two rhythmic units into a new higher unit under the influence of a change of pace. At the proper moderate pace of the tune the rhythm is definitely a smooth triple, the time-unit is the bar of three beats. This smoothness is essential to the beauty of the tune, and the more even (in time length) the bars are among themselves the smoother is the result. The *Cowley Carol Book* is therefore wrong (I submit with deference) to print Bach's harmonization of the tune in  $\frac{6}{4}$  time, while Sir Ivor Atkins's edition of the *Orgelbuchlein* is right to print it in bars of  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. If one goes further than the Cowley Book, and, with Stainer and Bramley, writes the tune in  $\frac{6}{8}$  and fits it with words such as will necessarily double the pace, one then has the tune completely vulgarized, and—this is the point—made into a tune whose rhythm is essentially duple. It is easy to demonstrate the effect, but difficult to put it on to paper.

## RHYTHM

It would look something like this

Good | Chris-tiān mēn rē- | joi-oi-oice  
With | heart etc.

instead of

In | Dul-ci | Jub-il | o-o- | o Let | etc.

Psychologically the mind has telescoped two bars of  $\frac{3}{4}$  and made them one of  $\frac{6}{4}$  (or  $\frac{6}{8}$ ), and turned a triple into a duple rhythm. Musically you can't turn triple rhythms into duple without outraging your tune, which is what has happened to *In Dulci Jubilo* at the hands of Stainer and Bramley. To return to  $\frac{5}{4}$  time, we see that there is no need to weave the comparatively fantastic hypothesis that the mind holds in unstable equilibrium two different time-periods when the simple explanation lies to hand that if the pace is suitable, the mind will do the normal thing and fasten upon a single time period as its rhythmic unit irrespective of the internal organization into 2, 3, 4, 5 or 7 pulses. If a bar of  $\frac{5}{4}$  time fell below a certain length of time, probably the rhythm would disintegrate into alternate

twos and threes. How slow this pace would have to be would have to be determined by further experiment in a psychological laboratory; but if the figures of Wundt and Dietze quoted by James are any guide, it would appear that every bar would have to last at least 6 and possibly as much as 12 seconds, which gives a metronome rate of  $J = 50$  or  $J = 25$  for a bar of  $\frac{5}{4}$  time. The scherzo of Tchaikowsky's 'Pathetic' symphony ( $J = 144$ ) is therefore a true five; so is Holst's 'Mars' (to which no metronome mark is given but cannot be much less than  $J = 112$ ) and the  $\frac{5}{4}$  passage in *The Hymn of Jesus* where the rate must be something like  $J = 144$ .

Our object in this enquiry is to find out what rhythm really is in terms of psychology, in order that the word may be used more scientifically in musical criticism. So far we have extracted this much, that in origin it is our native power of apprehending time and that it works by virtue of its two properties of periodicity and stress (or accent). But it is never safe to be content with origins in a world of which the law is evolution,

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and though I believe  $\frac{5}{4}$  time to be  $\frac{5}{4}$  and not  $\frac{3+2}{4}$ , there is some evidence for giving to rhythm a wider definition than periodicity and accent. Periodicity is disputed and in its place is put proportion.  $\frac{5}{4}$  which we have admitted by the front door may find itself ejected from the back, for if rhythm turn out to be proportion,  $\frac{5}{4}$  may find itself as merely the ratio of 3 : 2 in terms of crotchets.

I have been unable to trace any direct experimental evidence bearing on the point except such as is afforded by Bolton's experiment, though a writer in the *American Journal of Psychology*<sup>1</sup> denies that periodicity is the essential element in the appreciation of rhythm. "The results of experimental observation contradict such an idea", he says. "It is not the accurate measurement of successive intervals of time which is essential in rhythm, but the maintenance of proportionate relations among successive groups". The estimation of absolute duration in rhythm depends finally upon factors which are themselves subject to variation. The chief source of

<sup>1</sup> Robert MacDougall of New York (not to be confused with Prof. William MacDougall of Harvard, late of Oxford), Vol. XIII, Jan. 1902.

## PERIODICITY OR PROPORTION?

such variation he thinks is the experience of strain. "Accurate estimation of time in music obtains only between intervals whose durations measure like experiences of strain." Another source of variation is a dynamic change in successive intervals in which case "its psychological duration is immediately transformed beyond recognition."

That factors of this kind produce departures from rigid periodicity in the actual performance of successive bars of music is not to be denied, and indeed appeared in the experiment with the hymn tunes which I have already quoted. For example, A's average time per bar was 348 (hundredths of a second), a figure which actually occurred in three out of the eight bars; the bars containing crotchets varied between 333 and 342, which shows that this performer at any rate was not free from a frailty with which all teachers of music must be familiar. C is better in this respect and tends to make these bars very slightly longer rather than shorter. His average is 292, and excluding his long rallentando during the last two bars, his utmost variation is 5.

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What is denied is that such variations are anything more than slight departures from a norm which is held by the mind. One does not read poetry according to its scansion, yet the underlying regularity of the feet is felt in the background, otherwise the verse would have no movement and the accentuation would be that of prose. Certainly the sources of variation in music are innumerable. In the experiment with the hymns one may note the frequent half-closes, disturbing associations with words and physical details of performance such as the taking of breath and difficulties of fingering, final rallentandos and organist's starts, etc. In normal musical performances some of these disturbing elements will not appear, but others will take their place, e.g. the emotion of the particular piece of music and always the personal factor. Such variation is part of the essence of musical interpretation. But always it is variation from a norm, otherwise, as we know from our musical experience, the composition becomes unrhythical and falls to bits. A phenomenon like congregational singing is as good an ex-

## NORM AND VARIATION

ample of this as one can require. Any organist knows that for unconducted congregational singing rhythm of the most rigid kind is necessary. People are afraid to sing if they feel that there is the smallest danger of their singing being at any point a solo—the sound of one's own voice is one of the most terrifying things in the world. The only guarantee they have that their own noises will synchronise with their neighbours' noises is just precisely this rigid sense, which all have, for measuring duration accurately. The good organist takes care not to forfeit by tricks with the time the confidence which is so difficult to inspire in the non-musical, whose sense of rhythm, however, is fully adequate to tell them to a hundredth of a second when the next note is coming. They work to a norm.

I have been unable to find on what experimental evidence Mr. R. MacDougall bases his assertion that it is not periodicity but proportion which is essential to rhythm. A majority of authorities<sup>1</sup> seems to be against him, but he will

<sup>1</sup> J. B. McEwen, op. cit.; Miss Glyn, *Rhythmic Conception of Music* by definition; Tobias Matthay, *Musical Interpretation* among musicians; among psychologists periodicity does not seem to be disputed.

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find some to agree. Vincent d'Indy,<sup>1</sup> for example, boldly defines rhythm as "l'Ordre et la Proportion dans l'Espace et dans le Temps". Time and Space! The application of the term rhythm to the spatial arts is not uncommon. Some critics speak of the rhythm of a picture or a cathedral, and declare that they are not speaking in metaphor. Mr. R. O. Morris<sup>2</sup> not only consents to this extension of the original meaning of the word, but within the bounds of the art of music distends the word even further and makes it ultimately coincide with form or design.

The argument is important and runs somewhat as follows. A single note cannot be a rhythmic unit, but two can. One of the notes can be made more important than the other by means of an accent (or duration or stress or of both). In this way a centre of interest is created, the two components stand in intelligible relation to one another, and the phrase acquires an organic unity. Extend the phrase add others to it, till the whole is amplified into a musical

<sup>1</sup> *Cours de Composition Musicale*.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Nation*, 29 January 1921, in an article criticizing M. Jaques Dalcroze's conception of Rhythm.

## RHYTHM AS FORM

sentence, and then into a canto or paragraph and the same principle holds good. As the notes fall into groups clustering round a nucleus, so the groups vary in importance and organize themselves round one particular group which is the culminating point in its section. So with the sections. Thus there is a continual widening of the circle until rhythm becomes ultimately coincident with form or design. Form in this sense has to be distinguished from pattern, with which in music it is too often identified. Schubert has shown that it is possible to have pattern without form, and Beethoven (in the posthumous quartets) and Debussy (in *L'Après-Midi*) to have form without pattern or set arrangement. So long as each section of the work arises naturally from what has gone before and leads naturally to what follows, so long as the points of climax and repose are felt as inevitable and proper reactions from one another, it will not matter whether the themes have been presented in a certain order or not, but unity of structure will have been achieved and the listener's sense of form satisfied. This achievement is the work of rhythm in the

## RHYTHM

wider sense. The principle of coherence which gives structural unity to a piece of music is, then, rhythm. Grouping in painting or architecture is also a principle of coherence, why not call that rhythm also?

Is there any objection to this enormous extension of the word rhythm to (a) spatial experience or (b) to being equivalent in music with formal unity? I think there is, though at no point is it possible to say that an art critic is wrong or stultifying himself by talking of the rhythm of a picture; still less is it possible to dispute Mr. Morris's reading of the musical facts. The one, however, seems to me to be an abuse of language, the other a confusing rather than a helpful use of language, and both to do some violence to established psychological and philosophical ways of thinking. Mr. Morris's analysis of the building up of secondary rhythm leaves out one important element, viz. the element of duration. Duration may provide an agogic accent, he says, and it is accent that creates a centre of interest, but it is the disposition of centres of interest that for him constitutes

## THE ELEMENT OF DURATION

rhythm. The rhythmic unit has beside its centre of interest a certain duration. In the building up of a musical phrase by subordinating some of these units to other more important units you do not destroy nor lose sight of their duration which is approximately equal all the time. Take a comparatively rare, though quite simple, case of a 5-bar phrase, Brahms's part-song *Vineta*. The rhythmic unit is the bar of  $\frac{3}{8}$  time (i.e. the primary rhythm), 5 of such bars make a phrase, the unit of secondary rhythm, in which the strong bar, Mr. Morris's centre of interest, is usually the third with the first two leading up to and the last two leading down from it. As one phrase succeeds another the mind is conscious of the equality (in duration) of the phrases among one another. When, as occasionally happens, the five-bar rhythm is extended to six bars, the composition does not fall to pieces, because the primary rhythm is there all the time. Even the primary rhythm can be modified sometimes so long as behind it all the mind can feel the norm. In verse Poe has stated the principle that the regular foot

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must continue long enough in the line and be sufficiently prominent in the verse to establish itself thoroughly. Some go further and say that the introduction of a 3-syllable foot into an iambic verse is allowable only on condition that the 3-syllable foot can be read in the time of two. Without going quite so far as that Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie in his recent book *The Principles of English Prosody*, insists on periodicity in his main doctrine. “Metre”, he writes, “has two essential characters: (i) Rhythmic Constancy: the pattern persisting schematically through all variations and always heard in some recognizably equivalent form; (ii) Rhythmic Variation: the expressive speech-rhythm always changing over the pattern and capable of accommodating itself to the frame of the pattern. (i) will be called the *Base*, (ii) the *Modulation*, of a metre. The base is an ideal rhythm and is only ideally heard; it can never be realized in any rhythm of language—but it can decisively assert itself by compelling an actually varying series of natural rhythms to be heard with unmistakable reference to its standard.” Simi-

## TIME AND METRE

larly in music the mind always has its normal pulsation as a background to whatever variation may be made by a rallentando or by the interpolation of an irregular bar.

Let no one now claim a premature triumph and say “Now he is confusing rhythm and metre!” A great deal too much fuss is made about the difference between rhythm and metre in verse, and between rhythm and time in music. Rhythm is always the wide principle of temporal organization, metre and time are applications of the principle and refer to the internal organization of the rhythmic unit. It is not a crime to describe  $\frac{3}{4}$  time as triple rhythm:<sup>1</sup> you call it ‘time’ because you are describing roughly the internal organization of the bar which is the rhythmic unit. Time and metre are both rhythm, but rhythm means a great deal more than time and metre; certainly a person who cannot keep time is defective rhythmically (not temporally nor even temporarily!), but “rhythm” is more properly reserved for the feeling in the mind, for it has certain other characteristics,

<sup>1</sup> Beethoven’s *Ritmo di tre battute* is also triple rhythm, but secondary rhythm.

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cognitive, emotional and dynamical (i.e. leading to action), while time and metre are merely technical descriptions of the way rhythm has manifested itself in certain objective things called works of art. Time and metre therefore have

- (1) a much more restricted signification than rhythm, and are a special name of one small province of rhythm;
- (2) they are objective, while rhythm ought to have as far as possible a subjective sense,

and—

- (3) they are confined to the internal organization of the rhythmic unit.
- (4) Periodicity without stress might for purposes of musical criticism be called 'time' without rhythm. J. B. McEwen denies the name of rhythm to our perception of recurring points of time, like anniversaries, and says that this is periodicity without rhythm.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I felt the force of this when I heard a dull singer sing Peter Warlock's 'Piggiesnie' (a swinging 4-in-a-bar song). It was at once apparent that she had not got the rhythmic feeling of the song, but examination showed that the failing was not due to the common fault of singers—inability to sing rigid time periods—but the almost complete absence of stress. The flat monotonous vocal line was in time but rhythmless.

## NO RHYTHM IN PROSE

In this connection it would be well to remark that to speak (as Abercrombie does) of the rhythm of a word, such, e.g. as saying that the rhythm of "remarkable" is *ti-lúm-ti-um*, is not strictly accurate. If you don't call it its "scansion" you ought strictly to refer to it as its "rhythmic scheme". Similarly there is really no such thing as the speech-rhythm of prose, there is only contrast of strong and weak syllables. Rhythm implies some temporal organization; the final organization in prose is not euphony but meaning, especially the delicate suggestions and overtones of meaning.

Having digressed so far to define the lower limit to the meaning of the word it is time to return to the work of paring down the over-wide use of "rhythm" from which we started. Periodicity was found in the experiments quoted to be a condition of the mind forming a unity out of a sequence of sounds, and some analogies with other phenomena in Nature which we shall shortly examine offer confirmatory evidence. While it is legitimate to speak of the secondary rhythm of the juxtaposition of phrases in a

## RHYTHM

musical composition, while form may legitimately be distinguished from pattern, the legitimacy of calling that intellectual satisfaction derived from the order and proportion of parts in a whole by the name of rhythm is most highly disputable. *Without periodicity no perception of proportion in time is possible, because time is uni-dimensional.* In the most unrhythymical performance of a musical work imaginable there is a proportion between the different durations of different bars or different phrases though such proportions may not be able to be stated in convenient whole numbers like  $2 : 3$  or even  $200 : 201$ . What makes one set of proportions appear satisfactory and rhythmical and another painful and devoid of rhythm? In spatial arts we may not be able to say why a proportion like the Golden Section<sup>1</sup> causes us pleasure, but we can always say that the proportion of the height to the length of a cathedral is satisfactory, or that the proportion of length to breadth is unsatisfactory, because we have all the three distances to be compared in consciousness together. In music

<sup>1</sup> I.e. where a line is divided so that the ratio of the larger part to the smaller part is the same as the ratio of the whole to the larger part.

## PROPORTION REJECTED

we cannot do this, because one of the terms of comparison had already faded from consciousness when the next term enters. The judgement of proportion is impossible without a constant standard of reference persisting in consciousness against which variations can be judged. This norm is supplied by 'rhythm' in its most fundamental sense of the appreciation of equal time distances. It is therefore improper to apply the term rhythm to pictures and architecture, because our spatial experience is a different experience from our temporal experience, in spite of some points of resemblance, and it is an abuse of language to call two different things by the same name. If we permit the extension of the term to spatial experience, we cannot deny the word "rhythmic" to the perception of proportion in other kinds of experience. To carry in each hand a suit case weighing 20 lb. would give us the feeling of a smooth duple rhythm: to walk round a chemical laboratory and judge that two stinks were equally offensive but less offensive than a third would give us a waltz of smells.

## RHYTHM

Direct comparison is impossible in the perception of time, and a norm is therefore essential in appreciation of rhythm. In the art of poetry this norm is the foot, in music it is the measure, loosely called the bar, in dancing it is some unit of physical movement. In dancing the perception of equality is made not through the ear but through muscular sensation. Watching dancing would seem to be analogous to reading poetry to oneself in that both are late developments in which the original way of perceiving the rhythm, by muscular sensation in the one case, and by hearing in the other, is modified. At a ballet one sees the physical movement in terms of which the time is measured, but one does not *see* the rhythm, which is perceived by imaginary muscular sensations like the silent sounds of printed poetry. But the ability to feel the dance is probably rarer and weaker than the corresponding faculty of silently hearing poetry, and so music is almost invariably added to any kind of spectacular dancing. In music the bar line was not generally used before the middle of the seventeenth century when instru-

## THE BAR LINE

mental music had won its independence from vocal music. Through the middle ages the rhythm of music was determined by the rhythm of the words, and no bar lines appear in the part books of music as late as the Elizabethan madrigals. Composers writing in score found the need for bar lines as a mere guide to the eye, and the lutenists barred their tablature, though at irregular intervals according to the requirements of the voice part they were accompanying. This represents the transition stage; by 1660 all music was regularly barred and the most formal period of music began. It is only recently that complaints have been heard of the tyranny of the bar line and its equivalent in the next stage of musical structure, the tyranny of the four-bar phrase. The bar line is felt to be a tyrant in spite of its great value to a conductor for beating time, not so much on account of its stiff regularity, which composers and performers soon learned to conceal, as that it does not always or often correspond with the real measure, which may begin on a weak beat. Similarly with the four-bar phrase, composers before Brahms had

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learned how to make extended phrases fit into schemes of which the underlying structure was periods of four bars. The tyranny begins when the unskilful composer, or the composer writing to catch the public ear with an immediate appeal, mistakes the underlying norm as the complete rhythm of music; such a one is in the condition of the poet who identifies jingle with verse. Against the iambic norm of *Paradise Lost* the natural stresses of the words are felt:

Of man's first disobedience and the fruit.

To recite it according to its scansion is to turn it into nonsense. "Yet the metrical scheme also persists. You may not hear it, but it is somewhere in the back of your head all the time as a kind of pattern or standard to which every line of the poetry is referred, more or less unconsciously, for comparison. And the delight of reading good verse arises largely from this duality of apprehension. Each verse as it comes is both true to itself and true to type; the ear catches the stress in all its variety, the mind retains its hold on the quantities, short and long,

## THE UNDERLYING NORM

short and long, in orderly recurrence. Between the rhythmical accent (the accent of stress) and the metrical accent (accent of quantity) there is a continual interplay; sometimes they coincide, sometimes they are at odds, and the rhythmical problem before the poet is to strike the just balance. Too much coincidence means monotony; too much at-oddness means chaos.”<sup>1</sup>

The same thing is expressed in general terms and from an evolutionary point of view suitable to a psychological enquiry by Miss Glyn, who shall speak for herself:<sup>2</sup>

“ The character of rhythm in nature is that of irregular recurrence consisting of a series of undulations which are never at exactly equal distances, or of circles which are incomplete. Man has evolved the feeling for precisely regular time-divisions out of the necessity for concerted action—i.e. he has learned to keep strict time. This rhythmic perceptive feeling is essential to

<sup>1</sup> So Mr. R. O. Morris, *Contrapuntal Technique*, III, and it is thus that he elucidates the rhythmic problems of the madrigals which have given much trouble to singers and conductors. Each part is rhythmically free, but the composition as a whole is founded on a metrical scheme.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Rhythmic Conception of Music* (Longman's), a book bristling with capital letters and strange terms, but suggestive, and in places like the present, hitting the nail on the head with a precision that makes borrowing more profitable than fetching another hammer.

## RHYTHM

the art of music, and this affords an explanation of why there is no music in nature but the incoherent fragments of bird-song. Regular pulsative rhythm may be called the logic of music. Without exact time-diversion it is impossible to grasp rhythmic combinations. At the same time the history of art reveals the fact that exact symmetry is but a stage in its evolution. For example, in Assyrian and Egyptian sculpture of natural forms exact symmetry prevails, and regardless of existing variability of form in nature, but in Greek sculpture this rigidity has entirely disappeared. All art passes from the strict to the free, retaining only so much of the strict basis as is necessary to its intelligibility and to its actual structure.

“ For the understanding of the art of music it is necessary to realise the rhythmic principle involved in Strict Form and in Free . . . The first principle makes for coherence, because the exact relation is readily perceived, and it is the intuitive perception of relations that makes music intelligible to us and therefore coherent. In the mind of a hearer or performer of music this

## STRICT AND FREE

intuitive perception of relations awakens emotions of satisfaction and repose. But once let the relations become obvious, i.e. be too easily perceived, and these emotions are superseded by a feeling of monotony which speedily involves boredom if the same relations continue to be presented. In this sense of monotony lies the necessity for Free form, the necessity for a variation upon Strict Form which can only be made by the presentation of an inexact relation. Therefore the Free principle makes for variety and contrast, and its function is here to oppose and vary the exactness of Strict Form. A considerable degree of variety and opposition will produce a restless and agitating effect upon the mind . . . An extreme degree of inexactness will destroy the grasp of the exact relation. As the inexact relation is intuitively measured by the mind against the exact relation, by which means the amount of its variation is perceived, it is clear that if the feeling for the exact relation be partially lost music will appear incoherent, while if it be entirely lost the mind will be brought to a standstill in its grasp of rhythmic relations, and

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will therefore be unable to perceive music at all, but only chaotic tones. The law of the Union of Strict and Free Form is that the exact relation shall be clearly perceptible through the inexact relation."

Which brings us back to Abercrombie's "base", and "modulation" and the doctrine that periodicity is an essential element of rhythm, however much variety the ingenuity of composers may make by frequent changes of time signatures and interpolation of extra bars. Special rhythmic effects are of course produced by altering the unit, yet maintaining continuity by such a device as keeping the time value of the crochet constant. The change in the middle of Brahms's *Song of Destiny* readily occurs to the mind, where the drum triplet equal to a crochet of the Adagio becomes a bar of  $\frac{3}{4}$  time, and the incessant changes of time signature in the works of Stravinsky is only the pushing of this trick as far as (and perhaps farther than) it will go in order to produce an impression of tremendous restlessness and urgency. The mind becomes practised in holding on to the norm against an ever increasing

## THE NATURE OF RHYTHM

amount of variation, but sooner or later it can hold on no longer, and the unsatisfactoriness of much contemporary music is due to the fact that in their passion for variation composers outrun the power of the mind to establish or maintain the underlying periodicity which is essential to rhythm. On the other hand too much regularity is oppressive. Emphatic statement of the obvious is delightful to the unthinking mind, but boring to the more cultivated; repetition of the obvious soon becomes nauseating to everyone and the progress from the Strict to the Free (in Miss Glyn's phrase) is the mark of growth in all artistic appreciation.

It is time to sum up the facts so far elicited about the nature of rhythm:

- (1) The essential elements of rhythm are periodicity and accent; when periodicity alone is given the mind itself supplies an accent.
- (2) For accent duration may be substituted as an organizing principle within the period: a long note by its mere position

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among shorter notes acquires an 'agogic' accent, which may coincide with and reinforce an accent of stress.

- (3) Any internal organization of the rhythmic unit (within certain temporal limits) may be grasped as a whole: thus 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and even greater numbers of beats can go to a simple uncompounded bar of music.
- (4) Pace is the factor which determines how the grouping shall be made.
- (5) Rhythm should be a term applied only to temporal experience, and not regarded as a form of proportion. The reason for this is that time has only one dimension. In proportion different quantities can be directly compared with one another; in rhythm only indirectly by reference to a norm or standard.
- (6) The norms in music are the measure and the phrase, which correspond to the foot and the verse (i.e. the scansion of the 'line') in poetry; the equivalents in dancing are perhaps the step and the figure.

## SOME EFFECTS OF RHYTHM

(7) Against these norms are set many variations: syncopation, changes of unit by augmentation or diminution, rubato, interpolation of extra beats or bars, elision of beats or bars. But if the composition is to be intelligible it must be held together by the assertion and repetition of a normal period.

This then is what may legitimately be meant by the word 'rhythm' in art criticism. Its applications and effects are dealt with fully by teachers in the text-books of the various arts, music, poetry, dancing; it is not necessary to catalogue them here. But a few miscellaneous examples of the behaviour of rhythm will not be out of place. Having seen what it is, we may look at what it does. Some of its by-products, too, are interesting.

Two most striking effects of rhythm on the mind are known and employed by everyone without instruction from psychologists and musicians: walking in step or marching as a stimulant, and the rocking of cradles and lullabies as a

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soporific. It is common knowledge that broken step and aimless unrhythmic walking are more fatiguing than marching in time (either with or without brass band to reinforce the rhythm), and the reason is probably that the mind liberates floods of energy under an appropriate stimulus, especially when any of the instincts are tapped. Records are broken under the stimulus of emulation or self-assertion, high gates are cleared when a pursuing bull touches the instinct of fear, arduous or unpleasant tasks become easy and pleasant when spiced with a flirtation. Rhythm seems to satisfy some instinctive need, though as we have seen elsewhere rhythm cannot be classed quite as an instinct. When applied to walking the mind is interested and stimulated by the rhythm, and energy is liberated. The same principle has recently been to some extent applied to industry, with the result that fatigue has been saved, output increased and breakages reduced where a rhythm that suits the body has been found and employed (which probably means a rhythm that fits the periods of bodily functions like the heart and lungs). The soporific effect

## STIMULANT AND SEDATIVE

would seem to require an opposite explanation, but it may be attributed to the power which rhythm undoubtedly has of bringing order into a disordered mind and banishing anxious preoccupations which exist not perhaps in full consciousness but in the "fore-conscious". This power may be seen in all sorts of forms, of which the simplest is kicking one's heels. There are few occupations which bring peace and contentment to the mind and exorcise bad temper more effectively than sitting on the parapet of a bridge or a ledge of rock and knocking one's shoes to bits. Bach before a boat-race is an excellent sedative to the nerves, quiet music before bed-time is an insurance against insomnia, and an orchestral concert will often banish worry and resolve a problem of conduct. "Rhythm and harmony," says Plato, "find their way right into the inward places of the soul, on which they most powerfully fasten bringing grace<sup>1</sup> with them, and making the man graceful."<sup>2</sup> If rhythm has this power of removing obstacles

<sup>1</sup> *εὐσχημο σύνη*, i.e. the comeliness that results from being well-ordered, almost orderliness. Rhythm seems to tidy up the mind, but tidiness so easily becomes a vice that one hesitates to use the word in a good sense.

<sup>2</sup> Republic, Bk. III, 403d. I keep the word graceful for a reason which will appear later. Cf. below, p. 140.

## RHYTHM

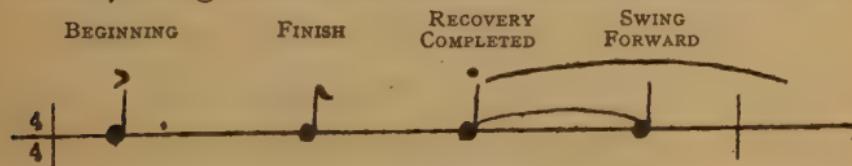
and resolving conflicts, it is easy to see that it may be a stimulant or a sedative with equal ease according to circumstance.

The practical uses of rhythm were appreciated very early in man's development. Indeed many writers<sup>1</sup> imply that man evolved his sense of rhythm in response to the need for concerted action. Before such an explanation can be confidently accepted, observations will have to be made on animals to see how far they may possess a rudimentary sense of rhythm. There can however be no doubt about the fact that the most primitive people are possessed of a keen sense of rhythm which they employ not only in their dancing but for practical purposes of hauling weights, building, etc. An activity in which rhythm unites with bodily movement, no longer for these primitive utilitarian purposes but for an end which, though not recognized as artistic, is not far removed from dancing, is the athletic practice of rowing. A pre-condition of pace, and therefore of success in boat-racing, is a good rhythm; hence the importance assigned

<sup>1</sup> Miss Glyn, op. cit., Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, pp. 55-7.

## ROWING

to the stroke of a crew. Rhythm here means its usual two things—regularity of period of stroke, and the way the movements which make up the individual stroke are organized with reference to one another.<sup>1</sup> In the orthodox Eton style this internal organization consists of (1) a strongly-marked beginning to the stroke when the blade enters the water, like the accent on the first beat of a bar of music, (2) a steady pushing of the stroke through without a further accent such as is produced by tugging with the arms at the finish, (3) a subsidiary accent caused by rapidly straightening the arms ("hands away") and raising the body at once to the perpendicular and (4) a steady swing forward which ought to take nearly as long as the first three movements put together. A very rough time scheme of the stroke would be



In actual practice the time ratios are not so simple as this; in a good crew the finish and

<sup>1</sup> An erratic rate of striking is hopeless, and the difficulty of spurring is to increase the rate without altering the ratio of the time taken in swinging forward to the time taken in swinging back (which would break the rhythm) and so disintegrating the crew.

## RHYTHM

recovery would probably have to be represented by a semi-quaver and the swing forward would not take quite so long as two whole crotchets. Differences between the Eton and the styles rowed by many foreign crews lie in a re-arrangement of the time periods and a redistribution of the accent. Jesus (Cambridge) style lightens the accent on the first beat and eliminates the subsidiary accent by shortening its finish and a peculiar use of the slide, and gives the general impression of being a three-in-a-bar kind of rhythm. This style is intermediate between English and the style rowed by the New Zealanders,<sup>1</sup> which felt almost like two in a bar. Battles rage in rowing circles as to which rhythm gives the best results. Whatever the answer to that may be, the moral effects are the same in all crews. If the rhythm is bad no pace will result (at any rate on courses over half a mile long), and every voyage will feel laboured and difficult; if to a good rhythm pace and feelings of ease and success are added, the emotional tone of that corporate personality, the crew, becomes good.

<sup>1</sup> Henley 1919.

## AN AID TO MEMORY

Good emotional tone is the best possible factor for releasing vast quantities of physical energy; better even than *avoirdupois* derived from over-eating. It is hardly necessary to add that a good crew is beautiful to watch in exactly the same way as good dancing is beautiful.

Another practical use is described by Mr. Cecil Sharp:

“ Mr. Herbert McIlwane, who spent many years in the Australian bush, relates that he noticed one evening in camp a black boy chanting a song in monotone, the while he struck a log with rhythmic blows of his hands. On enquiry the aboriginal explained that he was narrating an incident that had occurred that day, when a spare horse had bolted and had been captured after an exciting chase.

“ Rhythm and metre are aids to memory. The Countess Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco records that a modern Greek folk-singer once said to her, ‘ As I do not know how to read I have made this story into a song so as not to forget it.’ This is precisely what the Australian

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bushman was doing. The modern Greek and the antipodean native acted under the same impulse.”

They wished to preserve a story and their minds were unequal to it without the aid of rhythm. Such is the origin of all folk-poetry and all folk-song; this is how the Homeric poems began life. The keenness of primitive man’s appreciation of rhythm is attested by many anthropologists. Combarieu<sup>2</sup> quotes an extraordinary story from Central Africa, in which, like the pupils of M. Dalcroze, the natives carry on a rhythm silently in their heads: “Picture to yourself five hundred negroes swimming round a ship that has run aground and singing this tune; at the eighth measure they all dive at once and continue to follow the music mentally at the bottom of the sea; at the twelfth measure they shove the ship together, and at the sixteenth they rise to the surface. They act thus in concert and not one of their efforts is wasted.” There is also a story attributed to Wallaschek

<sup>1</sup> *English Folk Song, Some Conclusions*, p. 5.  
<sup>2</sup> *La Musique*, p. 148.

## A SOURCE OF ENERGY

that Kaffirs are punished by their fellow tribesmen with death for making a mistake in rhythm.

Nor does rhythm merely help out the mind in a difficult task; it may supply it with energy for tackling other work not susceptible of rhythm. A friend of the writer, a provincial musical critic, described to him an unexpected experience which once occurred to him after one of Mr. Harold Samuel's Bach recitals. After a heavy day of concentrated mental work unconnected with music, this critic wearily and with some reluctance went to Mr. Samuel's concert. At the end he found himself refreshed to such an extent by the vitality of the Bach-Samuel rhythm that he was able to return at a late hour to the other work and devote another couple of hours to it before going to bed. Similar if less striking cases are probably to be found in the experience of most musical people and of those who have a wide experience of ballet.

Akin to these psychological effects and part-way between them and the artistic effects designed by poets and composers there is a class which can only be described as moral. This has come as

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something of a surprise to us, but it was well known to the Greeks, and Plato gives it an important place in his educational scheme. "The whole of a man's life stands in need of a right rhythm", he writes in one place, and an even more striking passage has already been quoted. "The mere athlete becomes too much of a savage, and the mere musician is melted beyond what is good for him", he says when pleading for an education of music and gymnastic; and he might be describing in the first part of the sentence the state of affairs that prevailed till a short time ago in most English public schools and does still persist in a few, and in the other part he would be doing no great injustice to the youth of Kensington and Chelsea. It certainly seems that the Greeks did achieve, by means of some kind of rhythmic gymnastic training, a harmony of mind and body which we are unable to accomplish by our athletics. Something of their secret seems to have been rediscovered by M. Jacques-Dalcroze, who claims for his system of Eurhythmics that it is not merely a kind of Swedish drill, nor a special school of fancy

## MORAL EFFECTS

dancing, nor even an improved method of teaching music (which was the origin of the technique that he has evolved), but a far-reaching principle that must have effects upon every part of life, and is therefore an instrument of great value for general education. These claims must be fairly well substantiated, since Eurhythmics is making headway in schools; but schoolmasters are yet a long way from admitting the educational importance of right rhythms which Plato claims for them. He went so far as to forbid certain rhythms in his ideal state, because he believed that each of them had a definite moral effect that was undesirable, this metre being an expression of meanness, that of pride and the other of madness. We sometimes hear a modern equivalent of this in protests against ragtime and extreme forms of jazz music, on the ground that their rhythms are irritants, too intoxicating and morbid, but most commentators on Plato and educationists agree in treating these ideals of Plato as fanciful. None the less the healthiness of some rhythms has been rather remarkably confirmed in recent times by the observations of folk-

## RHYTHM

dancing teachers. Miss Mary Neal, a pioneer in the revival of folk-dancing and an authority on the subject, has organized many folk-dancing classes in town and country, and is in no doubt about the beneficial results. The members of these classes tended, when they started, to be dull and loutish in the country, vulgar and blatant in the big towns—if one may generalize and state the matter crudely. In both cases she noted that they had not been dancing for very long before they became not only more graceful in carriage (which one would naturally expect), but more alert mentally, more attractive personally, and to have become more harmonious personalities altogether.

If one asks why these things are so, why things so diverse and apparently so unconnected with one another as the sense of hearing, a savage's delight in his tom-tom, folk-dancing, rowing, the difference between poetry and prose, orchestral concerts, education and morality are yet linked by the one principle of rhythm, one can only put forward the most tentative sort of answer. It is far from being scientific and

## THE THROB OF THE UNIVERSE

seems merely fanciful, but one can only say this: the rhythmic principle goes very deep and on it the whole universe seems to be run. Times and seasons recur periodically and we mark them by anniversaries and special festivities (this corresponds to accent); the tides of the sea move with their own majestic rhythm; even sun spots have been observed to run in cycles of 11 years. The motions of the planets, the distribution of land and sea on the earth's surface, the alternation of night and day, the migration of birds, the physiological functions of breathing and walking, the heart-beat and the pulse, and, most important, all vocal utterance, witness to the all-pervasiveness of the rhythmic principle. We have learned, too, from physics that not only are sound and light both forms of vibration, but matter itself is in a constant state of rhythmic ebb and flow. It would therefore appear that the whole universe throbs with life (with the emphasis on 'throbs'), and the wonderful satisfaction which comes to us along the many lines we have surveyed is derived from putting ourselves into harmony with and becoming at one with the whole scheme

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of things. The spread of wireless telegraphy has taught to an immense number of persons the nature of wave-motion, and every listener-in knows that communication is impossible between instruments that are not in 'tune' with one another, i.e. set to the same vibrational frequency. Human life seems to obey the same laws, and we have more abundant life if we make it pulse with a rhythm in 'tune' with the Universal Rhythm.

But this is not science, nor even musical criticism.

## V

## APPLAUSE

IN the course of the second essay of this book a theory of applause was put forward which explained it in the light of the instinct of gregariousness. The amount of applause after any number in a concert programme is determined not by the depth of feeling or the intensity of the pleasure experienced by the audience, but by the homogeneity of the feeling, i.e. by the number of persons who experience a similar enthusiasm for the same piece of music. Hearty applause indicates that some considerable amount of group-feeling has been generated, and must not be regarded as a sign of any profound stirring of emotion, still less of the delivery of a critical judgement on the listener's part. The truth of this theory may be confirmed by a consideration of the kind of music which receives most applause.

## APPLAUSE.

The instance chosen for illustration was a folk song, which has an almost universal appeal, and the wise singer usually puts as the last song of a group, not necessarily the song which he thinks, or for that matter which his audience thinks, to be the best song, but the song which has certain applause-drawing qualities, which on examination are found to be qualities which make a wide appeal, such as a captivating rhythm or humorous words. This psychological explanation seems more acceptable than the ordinary rather crude view that audiences are through original sin inartistic, and do not applaud the best things loud enough or applaud the less good too loudly either from insensitiveness to beauty or from lack of critical ability.

But though this new theory may claim to be true, it does not cover the whole ground nor completely explain so variable and incalculable a phenomenon as applause at concerts, and a more thoroughgoing examination on psychological lines reveals one or two interesting points about it.

Music critics and concert-goers often complain of the inadequacy and clumsiness of applause as

## CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS

an instrument for performing the apparently simple task of registering approval and disapproval. It is clumsy in registering degrees of pleasure for purposes of comparison, and it is inadequate for distinguishing between the enthusiasm felt for the composition and that felt for the artist's performance of it. When an audience claps its hands, it is trying to do both of these things and several other things besides. Of some half-dozen elements which may be distinguished in applause the first is the natural tendency to move the body after a period of mental activity.

### *§ 1. The Need for Physical Movement.*

This tendency is much more fundamental than we have been inclined to reckon it. While psychology was part of philosophy it gave too intellectualist an account of human nature. The activities of pure mind, such as philosophizing or mathematical speculation or aesthetic contemplation, were regarded as signs that man was almost entirely a rational creature, and no physical foundation was sought for them beyond

## APPLAUSE

the fact that a man must breathe in order that he may think. Modern psychology has shown that this is not in fact the way the mind works. Fundamentally the human mind, like that of the animal, is a mechanism for *doing* things (conation) rather than for knowing or feeling, which are subsidiary to doing. The power of doing or striving is the most fundamental function of the mind because it is biologically prior to all the amazing powers which by evolution have been added to it.<sup>1</sup> Whether mind will ever evolve to the point where it will achieve Aristotle's idea (of purely speculative activity  $\delta\theta\epsilon\omega\rho\eta\tau\iota\kappa\circ\beta\iota\circ\delta$ ) and discard the biological foundations on which these higher activities are now based is a legitimate speculation, but it is quite certain that while we are not disembodied spirits, as at present, our minds are primarily striving organisms and that *doing*, i.e. making changes in our environment, is still the natural end of mental activity. This is one of the places where the recent work (of Freud, Jung and the others) on the diseased mind has brought evidence to

<sup>1</sup> This is not to say the most valuable function: origin and value have here as always to be distinguished.

## MIND AND MATTER

reinforce a view of the mind as it can be observed at work in normal behaviour.<sup>1</sup>

All this seems a long way from applause in a concert room, and we have yet further to go; but the psychological doctrine on which I am insisting is difficult to musicians, because art and intellectual speculation are the two exceptional realms of the mind, of which the psychologist finds it most difficult to give an account. The psychologist, looking over the whole range of human (and animal) activity cannot fail to come to the view that there is no sharp line between the physical and the mental, and that in any physical action on the part of any living creature above the level of the vegetables there is a mental element, and conversely there is no purely mental activity that has not some physical counterpart. While the mystery of the relation of mind to matter, soul to body, is just as much a mystery as ever it was, the interaction of the physical and the mental has been shown to be close and all pervading in all human activity.

<sup>1</sup> It is rather curious that Freud should combine his doctrine of the ' wish ', which is this conative activity of mind, with a rigid determinism in which cause is the only category he recognizes, and from which *purpose* is excluded.

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Two main lines of argument, the determinist and the teleological, have been advanced by different schools of thought to describe their interaction. According to the one, human behaviour is subject to the laws of mechanical causation like inanimate matter, and mental events such as experiencing an idea or a feeling are links in a chain of physical causation. This line of thought reached its extreme statement in the famous James-Lange theory of the emotions. According to this doctrine the physical manifestation of emotion *is* the emotion.

“ Emotion is a consequence, not the cause, of our bodily expression. Common sense says, we lose our fortune, are sorry, and weep; we meet a bear, are frightened, and run; we are insulted by a rival, are angry, and strike. The hypothesis here to be defended says this order of sequence is incorrect, that the one mental state is not immediately induced by the other, that the bodily manifestations must first be interposed between, and that the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry,

## JAMES'S THEORY OF EMOTION

angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike or tremble because we are sorry, angry or fearful, as the case may be."

This is an extreme and paradoxical statement which is not acceptable to most psychologists, but it does emphasize the very close connection between the subjective experience of a feeling and the overt physical action with which it is indissolubly connected. The other line of argument, the teleological, which is expounded very vigorously by Professor McDougall in his new book,<sup>1</sup> finds everywhere in the whole animal kingdom the operation of mind and the growth of intelligence in the services of those biological ends which the living creature pursues. The great urge of life by which the creature passionately strives to survive without questioning the worth-whileness of survival, drives the creature to master his environment and overcome all obstacles to the achievement of this master purpose. For this purpose knowledge is essential.

<sup>1</sup> *An Outline of Psychology.* Methuen, 1922.

## APPLAUSE

Any change in the environment must first be known before it can be dealt with. Cognition therefore is the first stage in any action, awareness of change is essential for action in the new situation, and mind evolves in the service of action, cognition is dependent on conation. Thus on either of these lines of thought the inseparability of the physical and the mental is a postulate of any progress in the science at all.

With this postulate in mind the psychologist is able to go ahead and put order into the chaos of the facts of behaviour, and McDougall, for instance, argues that things like simple apprehension which lead to judgement, and from judgement to belief, are not the purely intellectual processes that philosophers have unhesitatingly taken them to be. "But as in all thinking the conative factor plays an essential part in these processes":<sup>1</sup> And then at last comes the difficulty: "In aesthetic perception we are fully

<sup>1</sup> This is no place to criticize this doctrine, which is bound to enrage the straiter sects of philosophers. As always Prof. McDougall's arguments are clear and free from confusion, especially from the confusion of origin with validity, which in some insidious form or another intrudes itself into almost any account of the immense changes by which a thing evolves into something which superficially appears to be its own opposite.

## CONATION AND COGNITION

occupied in mere apprehension, conation is relatively at least in suspense, and therefore also judgement and belief. This attitude is not easily attained, nor can it be maintained for long by those who attain it. Simple apprehension<sup>1</sup> is then a late acquired attitude which we maintain but rarely and briefly. Affirmation or denial, acceptance or rejection, appetition or aversion normally results from and accompanies cognition.”<sup>2</sup>

The artist who is not interested in animal behaviour, or, for the moment, in moral conduct or anything but artistic activity, will feel that he has been defrauded by psychology. The first thing he considers, which to him is a basic fact of his own experience, proves to be the arch-exception to a rule that runs right through organic life, and he finds the psychologists at a loss to reconcile it with the other operations of the mind.

For this reason then it has been necessary to elaborate at length for musicians what is for psychologists a postulate about which they are

<sup>1</sup> This simple apprehension we may equate with Croce's *intuition* as being the essence of art; compare also Abercrombie's self-evident worth-whileness, which he calls 'face value'. *Essay towards a Theory of Art*.

<sup>2</sup> McDougall. *Outline of Psychology*, p. 376.

## APPLAUSE

no longer in serious doubt. Ribot for example states this principle: "Every intellectual state is accompanied by physical manifestations. Thought is not—as many from tradition still admit—an event taking place in a purely supersensual, ethereal, inaccessible world. We shall repeat with Setchenoff "No thought without expression", i.e. thought is a word or an act in a nascent state, i.e. to say, a commencement of muscular activity". The way in which activities like philosophy and art have established themselves as ends in themselves, unconnected with ulterior biological purposes, is a particularly striking example of that inexplicable kind of change which we call evolution. Recent psychological speculation on the way the change has come about is concisely summed up by Mr. A. G. Tansley.<sup>1</sup> Put crudely the hypothesis is something like this: The mind is charged with psychic, as the body is charged with physical, energy, which by the fact of being alive it must expend. This psychic energy, termed libido,<sup>2</sup> is in the main

<sup>1</sup> *The New Psychology*. Allen & Unwin, 1920. The reader is specially referred to Chapters VI, VII, IX, XIII and XIV.

<sup>2</sup> The denotation of this word is not yet fixed: I follow Tansley.

## PSYCHIC ENERGY

stored in the instincts and finds an easy outlet in the complexes (sentiments) which the mind builds up on the basis of these natively given dispositions, but a certain amount of it appears to be free and transferable to any channel according to need. When the maintenance of life is arduous the whole stock of energy will be absorbed in instinctive channels, but when the conditions of life become easier, free surplus energy is now available and must find other outlets. In children this takes the form of play; in the adults of primitive man the surplus is extended in aggressive fighting, on primitive craft-work and decoration, dancing and religious ritual. "As man gained more and more control of his environment and became organized in powerful nations so that peace and security became the normal lot of large numbers of the human race, the psychic energy available for employment in channels other than biologically necessary ones was greatly augmented, and at the same time the number and variety of these channels was largely increased. One great field was the development of every variety of handicraft. Of activities not directly

## APPLAUSE

utilitarian we have on the one hand the immense artistic developments of the ancient world—architecture, decoration, sculpture and painting, poetry and music; on the other the development of abstract thought—geometry, mathematics and philosophy.”<sup>1</sup> The growth of abstract thought is due to successive modifications of the normal biological process of the mind (perception—cognition—affect—conation, issuing in physical action) through which “truncations”, as Mr. Tansley calls them, of typical conations take place, and the end is shifted backwards from action to purely mental ends, first to the affective part of the process, then to the cognitive, and lastly to perception itself, in which class some ways of listening to music (e.g. aural training tests) must be included. These truncations are not all equally healthy. Where the impulse reaches the conative stage but just fails to issue in action, we have the ineffective person; where the end of the process is transferred to the affective stage we have the sentimentalist; but where the end

<sup>1</sup> Tansley, op. cit., p. 80. Cf. also Ribot’s *Psychology of the Emotions*, Ch. X for a sketch of the development of the arts from the germs discernible in the activities of primitive man.

## EVOLUTION OF ART AND SCIENCE

is in cognition by and for itself, we have a man who may be regarded as falling short of ideal manhood—or even with some slight contempt—in spite of brilliant abilities and a wealth of knowledge, but through whom, nevertheless, the development of the highest powers of the mind has become possible. There seems to be less danger in breaking the chain of mental process in the middle than at either end, where we have on one side the butterfly-minded and on the other the sentimental and the feckless. This may be because an end in cognition is generally the starting point for further cognitive activity, while the sensationalist and the sentimental make no new integrations from their sensational and emotional experience respectively. These facts throw some light on the commonly recognized dangers of the artistic temperament.

Having thus summarily sketched the course of evolution of those most highly valued powers of the mind which appear to differ almost beyond the possibility of reconciliation from its most fundamental functions, we may return to the concert hall. Artistic activity, it appears,

## APPLAUSE

especially the activity of listening, which does not involve rapid movements of the fingers or diaphragm like those of the executive musician, is a species of cognition divorced from conation. This, as we have seen, is contrary to the general working of the mind.

It is not surprising therefore that the feelings of strain or discomfort which accompany the thwarting of any conation may easily arise after listening to music.<sup>1</sup> Especially will this happen if the music stirs the emotions (by sympathetic communication, as I argue in Essay III). For emotion is the dynamic of life; is indeed in its primary form incipient conation. And this is precisely what does happen whenever we attempt to avoid the elementary rule that bodily movement accompanies all mental activity. In art and intellectual pursuits, where the activity begins and ends in the mind and there is no appropriate action in which the conation can issue, this absence of action is felt by the mind as a vague uneasiness which is relieved by aimless movements, getting up from one's chair, stretching

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above Essay II, p. 27.

## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL RELIEF

the arms, yawning even. So after listening to any sermon, lecture or music, however engrossing, there comes a point when the impulse to move becomes urgent, and in pondering any problem the mind is helped if the thinker paces up and down. Yawning and pacing up and down are not, of course, the conations proper to mathematical speculation or attention to music, *but these bodily movements must be regarded as vestigial remnants of a lower stage of evolution, when the whole energy of the mind was devoted to practical (i.e., biological) ends.* Of these vestiges applause has remained as the most appropriate physical outlet for the energy released by the cognitive activity of listening. And this is the primary and most elemental fact about applause, and arrangers of programmes should not altogether lose sight of this physical need of their audiences. Cunning orators, we know, space out their speeches with suitable gaps for the intervention of 'Hear Hears' and the clapping of hands. In music the need is so much the greater from its strongly rhythmical nature. The tendency of a rhythm is to express itself at once in

## APPLAUSE

immediate movements corresponding to the character of the rhythm, and all accompanists know that applause is hardly to be held back at the end of a song with a vivid rhythm, once the singer's last note has ceased.

### § 2. *Gregariousness.*

If this need for physical movement is the first element in applause, that gregariousness of which I have spoken in Essay II is the second. For as I there pointed out, if one is alone in a music-room with the performer, the tendency to physical movement will not take the form of applause but of shifting one's seat or a request to see the music. The presence of about a dozen persons seems to be the lower limit for the beginnings of applause, but generally a number approaching fifty is needed for anything like whole-hearted hand-clapping. The size of the room, however, and the physical closeness of the members of the audience to one another has an influence on the generation of gregarious feeling without which applause does not naturally arise. There is nothing more depressing than perform-

## SUGGESTION

ing in a large room where there are wide empty spaces between the listeners, even if the latter are in point of fact fairly numerous. The atmosphere is less cold in the Wigmore Hall full, than in the Albert Hall half full, though the actual number is perhaps ten times as great in the larger building. The reason for this would seem to depend on the conditions which govern the operation of suggestion, which is indispensable for securing uniformity of thought and feeling. Suggestion is essentially a process of communication and has been described as the chief cognitive organ of the herd instinct, i.e., it is the chief inlet channel through which stimuli can enter and start the instinct working. I have called it an organ, but the term is a misleading one, for suggestion makes use of perception through the ordinary senses, and it is not necessary to regard it as an independent and mysterious faculty of the mind. Since its workings depend on ordinary sense perception, unless the members of an audience are fairly close to one another, the subtle signs of emotion will not be detected by each man in his neighbour. Physical closeness

## APPLAUSE

also determines whether another condition which governs the arousal of group feeling shall be fulfilled, viz. that the emotion shall find outward expression. I cannot do better than quote McDougall:<sup>1</sup>

“ The spreading and the great intensification of emotion seem to depend upon its being given expressions that are perceptible by the senses. So long as its expressions are suppressed, the emotion of an assembly does not become excessive. It is only by eliciting and encouraging the expressions of emotions that the revivalist, the political orator, or the comic man on the music-hall stage achieves his successes. That expressions of emotion are far more effective than the emotion itself is recognized by the practice of *claqueurs*. When an audience has once been induced to give expression to a common emotion, its members are, as it were, set in tune with one another;<sup>2</sup> each man is aware that he is in harmony with all the rest as regards his feelings and emotions,

<sup>1</sup> *The Group Mind*. Cambridge Univ. Press, 1921, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> N.B. The context is a discussion of telepathy.

## EXCITEMENT OF GROUP-FEELING

and even in the period during which all expressions are suppressed by the audience, this awareness serves to sustain the mood and to prepare for fresh outbursts. The mere silence of an audience, the absence of coughs and shufflings and uneasy movements, suffices to make each member aware that all his fellows are attentive and are responding with the appropriate emotion; but it is not till the applause, indignation, or the laughter breaks out in free expression that the emotion reaches its highest pitch. And a skilful orator or entertainer, recognizing these facts, takes care to afford frequent opportunities for the collective displays of emotion."

It remains to give some account under the heading of gregariousness of the behaviour of a "Gilbert and Sullivan" audience. Without going into the intricacies of the question what exactly an opera is, we may assume that it is a play with music, or at any rate music with a play, i.e. it has a plot and also some moments when actions must give way to some elaboration of the emotions

## APPLAUSE

which arise from the dramatic situations, i.e. it is at once dramatic and lyric, and needs a balance to be struck between these two elements. But operatic audiences, especially Gilbert and Sullivan audiences, cannot be induced to give the drama a chance to produce its own more highly integrated pleasure; the lyrical moments are seized and a clamour goes up after each to repeat the stimulus and experience the same emotion all over again. This is, of course, absolutely indefensible for the double reason that it is unfair to the drama and also that like everything else in life the same thing can never happen twice; by destroying the dramatic context you cannot give rise to the same emotional commentary. This operatic encoring by people who really know better, who are quite capable of appreciating dramatic art, is something of a mystery similar to mob violence committed by respectable citizens, and must find its explanation in the same direction. The banality of operatic plots is often offered as the reason, but this is a rationalization not a reason; no one can seriously pretend that in the *Yeomen of the Guard*

## GILBERTIAN AUDIENCES

the emotional moments do not depend on the developing situations of the plot, which is a good one. The explanation I now put forward I should not like to push too seriously, but I find it attractive.

A good deal has been written about the degradation in thought, feeling and conduct which takes place when an assembly of people begins to show signs of the *crowd-mind*. M. le Bon<sup>1</sup> found that the characteristics of a crowd were:

- (a) a descent of several rungs in the ladder of civilization;
- (b) a general intellectual inferiority as compared with the isolated individual;
- (c) loss of moral responsibility;
- (d) impulsiveness;
- (e) credulity;
- (f) exaggeration;
- (g) intolerance;
- (h) blind obedience to the leader of the crowd;
- (i) a mystical emotionalism.

<sup>1</sup> Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd* : A study of the Popular mind.

## APPLAUSE

These attributes he found to be due to what he called the "law of the mental unity of crowds", by which the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, conscious personality vanishes, and a "collective mind" is formed, which is not the sum, but only the highest common factor of all the minds comprising the crowd and is therefore equal to something less than the lowest. The "collective mind" consists in the main of "general qualities of character" which are our common racial inheritance. It is an "unconscious substratum" which in the crowd becomes uppermost. Le Bon has been rightly criticized on the grounds of his political prejudice and on account of the unsatisfactory character of this hypothesis of a collective mind. But the characteristics he enumerates may be accepted and the "unconscious substratum" has undoubtedly got a good deal to do with crowd-thinking and crowd-behaviour. The Gilbert and Sullivan audience is a crowd, for its members have a single object of attention, a single feeling of enthusiasm for it, and a single purpose, namely to encore the

## FANATICISM OF THE CROWD-MIND

song just finished, and it exhibits most of the characteristics enumerated by Le Bon. It is perhaps going rather far to say that it has descended several rungs in the ladder of civilization, and an audience's moral responsibility would not seem to go beyond respecting the desire of people whose last trains leave early, to hear the last part of the work, or consideration for tired and overworked artists. Its critical inferiority however is a byword; its impulsiveness and exaggeration are obvious; it is intolerant of the highbrow who won't let himself go with the rest of the herd; and the mystic emotionalism, more often seen at concerts than at the opera perhaps, appears in the fanatical devotion which a craze for any particular label will inspire (one year the Russian Ballet, the next year *The Beggar's Opera*, the year after *The Immortal Hour*; this clique's devotion to anything 'modern', that set's objection to anything by Brahms, the old brigade's obsession for the name of Beethoven). All these facts too may safely be assigned to the "unconscious substratum becoming uppermost and dominating the personal consciousness". In a

## APPLAUSE

recent book<sup>1</sup> Everett Dean Martin relates this view of the behaviour of crowds to Freudian discoveries and sees in it a close parallel to the action of the unconscious in people suffering from various forms of psycho-neurosis (especially paranoia). He makes out a strong case for his thesis into which we need not go, but stimulated by its suggestiveness we may seek a Freudian explanation of the Gilbert and Sullivan neurosis. A favourite idea of Freudian psychology is "Infantile Regression"; the unconscious is continually harking back to infantile desires and even to pre-natal experience. (This latter is called the Nirvana Principle and like all the more startling of Freudian terms and doctrines is spelt by Freud's disciples with capital initials). A crowd, then, such as the audience at *Iolanthe* or *The Yeomen*, becoming dominated under the influence of crowd emotion by the subconscious mind returns to its infancy, and like the chubby infant clapping his tiny hands and shouting "'gain, 'gain", enjoys the present sensation, regardless of joys to come, insistent on the

<sup>1</sup> *The Behaviour of Crowds*. Harper, New York, 1919.

## THE APPLAUSE-FIEND

immediate gratification of the impulse of the moment and blindly following the lead of the most leathery-handed or brazen-throated enthusiast. Perhaps after all it is a descent of a rung or two of the ladder of civilization to return to the mentality of a two-year-old.

Similarly we may find in the same Freudian<sup>1</sup> regions the most satisfactory explanation of that tiresome phenomenon, the applause-fiend, who shouts "Bravo" before the music has stopped, who fills in a silent bar with enthusiastic clapping and who calls for encores on the slightest provocation. A certain number of casual concert-goers become accidental and temporary applause-fiends from ignorance and an anxiety not to be remiss in performing a proper social gesture, and it is noteworthy that the more habitual the concert-goer, the less he tends to applaud, while a musical critic can generally be detected by his ungregarious behaviour after the music has finished. Anyone who has lectured or made music to boys and girls at school has seen the other end of the same tendency; school-children,

<sup>1</sup> The use of "Freudian" is really unwarrantable, but I cannot bring myself to write "psychopathological" at all frequently.

## APPLAUSE

partly from a lack of certain knowledge of concert behaviour, partly from politeness, and partly from their own internal necessity for physical movement and the desire to make a noise themselves, invariably clap everything twice as long and twice as loudly as an adult audience. But your true applause-fiend is he who aspires to be the complete, 'hundred-percent' herd-man. The audience is going to applaud and he knows it; he will identify himself with this herd; he wants the herd to become a thorough-going crowd and to develop the lower kind of group feeling which we have called crowd-emotion; he may even aspire to be in a small way a crowd-leader. He exhibits two of the most marked characteristics of a crowd, its hero-worship and its self-importance. These two traits at first sight seem to pull in opposite directions, but on examination are seen to be two manifestations of the egotism of the unconscious. Like the patient suffering from delusions (paranoia) the crowd *compensates* in the unconscious for the failures and shortcomings of which the conscious mind is only too painfully aware.

## THWARTED SELF-ESTEEM

The most repressed kind of person who is least valued by the community finds in crowd-life the feelings of success, power and freedom from restraint which in his individual life he most sorely wants. The crowd provides, as it were, a pool for the thwarted self-esteem of each member, and each member, though he cuts but a poor figure individually, finds his self-feeling swollen by the whole pool of esteem, and when he speaks, or as in this case applauds, he is delivering not his private judgement, which as he has observed carries little weight, but that of the whole assembly, which by weight of numbers is unassailable and therefore right. The crowd however cannot get on without a hero in the sense of a representative man, and upon him who is thus only a personification of itself, it pours out its veneration. And so when at a concert a popular contralto sings a song of the kind which is itself a crowd-phenomenon (like the late Lord Northcliffe's journals or 'John Bull' under Mr. Bottomley's editorship) she becomes the idol of the audience, the crowd-representative, upon whom all its thwarted self-esteem descends

## APPLAUSE

in the form of hero-worship. The applause fiend by getting in both the first and the last hand-clap makes himself the mouthpiece of this hero-worship and gets for himself the glorious feeling of superiority which belongs to the dispenser of patronage. He is indeed twice blest, for he in the crowd and the crowd in him are at once giving and receiving adulation, delicious feelings which the poor repressed individual never experiences in ordinary social life.

### § 3. *The Critical Element.*

A third element in applause which we may consider, the most obvious of them all, is the more or less critical element which expresses the amount of pleasure the listeners have received from the artist's performance of the music. In spite of the other factors which we have noted, the amount of clapping is a rough gauge of the amount of pleasure experienced and indicates very crudely the *judgement* of the audience. Pleasure is not a commodity susceptible of nice measurement and expressible in exact quantitative terms, but it

## PLEASURE AND JUDGEMENT

so far lends itself to calculation as to permit one to speak of more or less of it. Beauty on the other hand is entirely a matter of quality: it is really nonsense to say that one thing is *more* beautiful than another; it can only be *differently* beautiful, as people generally perceive when they are constrained to compare two beautiful objects. Hence while the pleasure of the audience may very roughly be expressed quantitatively by the applause, the attempt to express an aesthetic judgement in the same way is liable to the most fantastic error, and almost any concert will furnish instances of works which have small aesthetic worth yielding considerable pleasure. And it is really unreasonable to complain that the judgements of audiences are unsound, for the reason that they are bound to express in terms of quantity what is essentially qualitative and not measurable with a foot-rule or a pint-pot. The discrimination between the pleasure felt and the value judged must not be worked too hard, since undoubtedly there is a fairly close correspondence between them. A cold judgement that "this is beautiful but gives me no pleasure" is disingenuous and

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only doubtfully possible.<sup>1</sup> Still there are elements in the total pleasure given by a particular bit of music, which are rightly regarded as extras over and above the pure aesthetic pleasure, e.g. the sensational pleasure of an outstanding beautiful voice, or the satisfaction that comes from observing superlatively good craftsmanship, virtuosity of voice or fiddle. Nor must we forget the most important of all these discrepancies between pleasure and aesthetic value, the intensification of the pleasure due to the operation of the herd instinct which we examined in our earliest chapter. We reach, then, the position that the critical element in applause is liable to two distortions: (1) that the audience is primarily expressing its pleasure rather than its judgement, and that though the pleasure and the aesthetic value (expressed in judgement) are largely co-extensive, the pleasure is a wider thing and includes several other elements; (2) even if the value as judged and the pleasure felt should amount to precisely the same thing, the audience

<sup>1</sup> This is denied by some people (e.g. Mr. E. F. Carritt in *The Theory of Beauty*), and it must be admitted that the question of style is involved. It is possible to recognize the beauty and the value of a work of art in a style that one does not greatly admire.

## VALUE

is still faced with the really impossible task of expressing in terms of quantity what is essentially qualitative, i.e. of expressing by the amount of noise a judgement of value.

It is this critical function of the audience which in the long run and in the last resort determines the future development of the whole art. At any given concert the applause may woefully distort the aesthetic judgement of the audience and the judgement itself may subsequently prove to have been a superficial and worthless one, but, as the whole history of music shows, there is no appeal from the verdict of a succession of audiences. The listener's judgement of the value of a work is what determines whether it shall live or die, and to a considerable extent the amount of influence it shall have on other composers. What meaning then are we to attach to 'value' and what psychological account can we give of a judgement of value?

'Value' is a term of the highest importance in aesthetic no less than in moral philosophy, and as I have already made use of the conception (in

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the essay on Emotion) and as in the present essay I have already surveyed some of the mental operations from which it is derived, it will be appropriate to give it some small amount of the psychological scrutiny which it deserves.

It may be defined as the power to satisfy the whole mind. Primarily man finds satisfaction (and happiness) only in the accomplishment of his instinctive desires. That and that alone has value which gratifies the instincts: and all men, however highly civilized, find their deepest (though not necessarily their highest) satisfaction in the satisfying of the three major instincts of self-maintenance, parenthood and social intercourse, while unfortunately only too large a number of people have few sentiments (complexes) in addition to these from which they may derive happiness. These are the purposes of living which aim at nothing beyond themselves. The satisfaction has an immediacy and obviousness which is self-sufficient. I cannot forbear quoting William James's famous description of this self-sufficiency of instinct.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. James, *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. II, p. 386, or in the shorter text book, p. 394.

## JAMES ON INSTINCT

“ Not one man in a billion, when taking his dinner, ever thinks of utility. He eats because the food tastes good and makes him want more. If you ask him *why* he should want to eat more of what tastes like that, instead of revering you as a philosopher he will probably laugh at you for a fool. The connection between the savory sensation and the act it awakens is for him absolute and *selbstverständlich*, an *a priori* synthesis of the most perfect sort, needing no proof but its own evidence . . . To the metaphysician alone can such questions occur as: Why do we smile when pleased, and not scowl? Why are we unable to talk to a crowd as we talk to a single friend? Why does a particular maiden turn our wits so upside-down? The common man can only say, ‘ *Of course* we smile, *of course* our heart palpitates at the sight of the crowd, *of course* we love the maiden, that beautiful soul clad in that perfect form, so palpably and flagrantly made from all eternity to be loved.’ And so probably does each animal feel about the particular things it tends to do in presence of

## APPLAUSE

particular objects. They too are *a priori* syntheses. To the lion it is the lioness which is made to be loved, to the bear, the she-bear. To the broody hen the notion would probably seem monstrous that there should be a creature in the world to whom a nestful of eggs was not the utterly fascinating and precious and never-to-be-too-much-sat-upon object which it is to her."

But we have already observed how in the course of development the human mind comes to pursue ends other than these obvious and self-sufficient ends furnished by crude instinct; how the chain of processes whose successive<sup>1</sup> links are perception, cognition, affect, conation and motor discharge (action) may be broken and the process truncated by what is termed psychical displacement, and how different new higher (question-begging epithet, but it must stand) ends come to be substituted for the original instinctive ends. As these secondary ends develop they become able to yield appropriate satisfactions of their

<sup>1</sup> The reader is reminded of the caution given on p. 39 of II against regarding this chain always as a temporal sequence.

## DISINTERESTEDNESS

own, which like the primary satisfaction of instinct is affective (emotional) in character. This secondary satisfaction is denoted by the philosophical term 'value,' a certain quality of intrinsic<sup>1</sup> worth-whileness. Objects possessing value (in this narrower derived sense) like the objects of our instinctive desires carry with them their own justification and *raison d'être*, they are ends in themselves not means to anything further, but they differ from instinctive ends in that their pursuit is said to be *disinterested*. A man who pursues what he instinctively desires may be acting quite properly, but he is not acting disinterestedly; but anyone who pursues goodness, truth or beauty is acting disinterestedly, however much satisfaction may and indeed must accrue to him as a by-product of the pursuit.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Again a question-begging adjective to apply to anything in a universe of relativity. Man is indeed the measure of all things, so let us for the moment at any rate regard him as a standard and at any rate 'relatively' fixed.

<sup>2</sup> The reader may be referred to the article on *Value* by Mr. F. C. S. Schiller in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (Clark, Edinburgh, 1921). According to Mr. Schiller the conception of value, though deriving ultimately from Plato's Idea of the 'Good', is a fairly recent one and may be regarded as perhaps the greatest philosophic achievement of the nineteenth century. The term is of course derived from economics. Besides this original conception of value, ethical and aesthetic values are recognized by universal agreement as ultimate values; pleasure (and negatively pain), the objects of the religious consciousness, biological (i.e. survival) values also have claims to recognition,

## APPLAUSE

In Essay III the view was put forward that a work of art is itself a judgement of value which has received a permanent expression. Here we have the view that applause, and we may add criticism, is also a judgement of value. But I am not proposing to argue that applause is a work of art. The essential sameness, however, of the activities of making and listening to music, which is implied in the Crocean aesthetic and which is almost an axiom of the Musical Appreciation movement, receives some support from my two analyses. The actual hand-clapping is not of course the criticism, but is an epi-phenomenon, i.e., a vestigial by-product of the mental activity of criticising. Criticism is the expression of a judgement of value, and the experience which is its subject and starting-point is a musical experience. Criticism is therefore a work of art in the second degree and comment on a critic's criticism may be art at three removes, but such judgements of value have their ingredients

and logic now claims to be the science of cognitive values. This list, however, may be reduced to three, since the rest are in the last analysis reducible to goodness, truth and beauty, the objects of the three "normative" branches of philosophy, which seek universally valid norms. These three may therefore be regarded as 'categories' of the judgement of value.

## CRITICISM

compounded not only in different media (words and concepts instead of sounds or colours) but also in different proportions, the cognitive element gaining at the expense of the affective.<sup>1</sup>

It remains now only to note one or two small points which sometimes influence an audience in addition to those already discussed. Chief of these is the sporting spirit which is readily called out by any attempt to perform under disabilities of any kind—indisposition, old age (e.g. in the case of a favourite singer past his prime who takes a familiar role on a special occasion), or emergency (as when an understudy or substitute takes a part at short notice). Akin to this is the politeness which tolerates incompetence, and which drives those who are at once more brutal and more sensitive to accuse the concert-going public of being Philistines and fools. Somewhat similar is the modern form of chivalry which an undergraduate audience will show to an attractive lady violinist, an element which is discernible even when the playing is very good indeed.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie's view of criticism as the temporary destruction of art and its rebuilding into a richer experience. *Essay towards a Theory of Art*, pp. 54 sq.

## APPLAUSE

Often in the case of a very great artist or an old favourite a definite attempt, akin to the hero-worship we have already examined, but more deliberate, is made by the audience to do him signal honour. The laurel wreath business can be overdone and may become as foolish, though not so insincere, as the debutante's bouquets, which at London concerts are for a mockery unto the cynical. But a certain note of determination and real respect, unlike the subconscious crowd hysteria, creeps into the applause which recalls such an artist time after time to the platform. Lastly there is the deliberate encore which unequivocally wants the repetition of the last song or in another case the addition of an extra piece in a different style. Sometimes the demand is ambiguous and the concert artist realises what a poor implement applause is for expressing anything beyond the immediate pleasure of the audience. About all of these there is nothing that is not perfectly clear psychologically.<sup>1</sup> They are motives which are what they profess to be, and which, when present, are easy to detect.

<sup>1</sup> Except perhaps the sporting spirit, which has to be traced back through a long and interesting history to the combative instincts.

## SILENT APPLAUSE

Perhaps the best practical suggestion that has been made for improving applause is the substitution of raising the arms and waving the hands for clapping. This has been successfully tried at several international conferences, and speakers found it a great improvement on the noisy interruption of ordinary applause. Instead of being cut short in the middle of a sentence, they could go on with their addresses, preserving the logic and grammar of what they were saying, yet feeling the stimulation of the audience's approval. But for effective use in the concert-hall the idea would have to be carried further. Every seat would have to be fitted with a set of differently coloured flags. The listener could then express his opinion on the merits of a new work by waving in his right hand a white or a black flag, while he could mete out a nicely graded appreciation of the performer's efforts by brandishing in his left hand one of half a dozen pennons graded from red (poor) to violet (superb) through the colours of the solar spectrum!

The chances of the adoption of this refined applause seem remote.

## VI

### INSPIRATION AND THE SUB-CONSCIOUS

OF all the questions which Music can address to Psychology the most searching is "What is the nature of inspiration?" Can Psychology say anything useful on that central problem which baffles musicians, defies philosophers, disconcerts educationists and fascinates the plain man. The answer to that question is "Not much" and must be pitched in a humble key. The kernel of the thing is undoubtedly the flash of intuition which philosophers have long regarded as the essential and characteristic activity of the human mind in its lowest terms. These terms have been accepted as ultimate and irreducible. Mind is the thing which makes intuitions, intuitions are things which the mind makes. Psychology has pushed the analysis one stage further by its conception of the sub-conscious mind. But you can't be said to have helped on

## INTUITION

the understanding of anything by relegating it to the sub-conscious. None the less some of the characteristics of the sub-conscious are known from other sources, and it is of some interest to isolate these elements in the mental process of making music.

We may perhaps assume that at bottom the nature of all intuition is the same; it is what the derivation of the words suggests—a seeing; suddenly something is presented clearly to the mind just as the vision of the external world is presented to the eye. But the content of the vision differs according as we are chemists, mathematicians, writers or musicians. This is a difficulty, for if mental ability is a single thing one would expect to find the same man equally clever at any subject. There is also the doubt suggested by the fact that there are several ways of arriving at an understanding of anything—though this again depends on the subject matter: one can learn by doing, one can learn by rote, one can use an inductive or a deductive method. But the end is in every case the same an understanding expressible in the form of a

## INSPIRATION

judgement. The explanation of the fact that a man may be a genius in painting, a wise man in practical affairs and a fool at mathematics, is probably partly emotional and partly sensational. Clever people are very often clever all round; when they are not, it is probably largely a question of what interests them; i.e. the explanation is ultimately one of their emotional as much as their intellectual endowment. In the case of people with uncanny musical ability, an abnormally sensitive ear coupled with an exceptional aural memory is the thing that goes farthest to explain such a phenomenon as a Mozart. Anyhow, one cannot resist the conviction that all thinking is at bottom one, and that in its nature it is an act of comparison. The poet may be taken as the type of all thinking, and poetry might almost be defined as the seeing of resemblances where none exist. The greatest thing by far, said Aristotle, is to be a master of metaphor. New truth is the perception of a new analogy, the artist is one who reveals an unsuspected relationship. If one says 'How can a new melody be an analogy?' one replies that it is a

## THE NEW BORN FROM THE OLD

relationship anyhow, a relation of pitches and time intervals, and that it is moreover a comparison made by a new mind between all the tunes that have gone before in the composer's experience. For in the musical education there is only one way to new ground and that lies along the main road which all previous composers have trodden. No composer has ever invented a new form, he has always expanded an old one: every harmonic innovation is soon seen to be a development of what has gone before, not an invention springing fully grown from the head of Apollo.<sup>1</sup> It took a hundred years of progressive experimenting to cross from the modal system to modern tonality. In music, much more than in the visual arts where Nature herself offers a limitless field for comparisons, the new is always the outcome of the old, and the "influences" that have operated on a composer may always be legitimately sought, for without them there could be no new compositions at all. This then is one characteristic of musical intuition, though so far nothing new has appeared that was not known to philosophy

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. G. Dyson's *The New Music* passim.

## INSPIRATION

before psychology set up as an independent science. Intuition, however, whether it be the spark of genius or an ordinary perception of an ordinary man, such as the perception that any two sides of a triangle are greater than a third, always appears to introspection as a flash of light out of darkness, as something coming up from somewhere and beginning to exist where only a second before there was a void. The spark or flash is the only metaphor which really describes what happens. If one is following an argument the current, as it were, banks up at a terminal and then suddenly leaps across into full consciousness. The point of a joke is first not seen, then fully seen; the germ of a tune "occurs" to the mind of a composer, who may, if he is a Beethoven, subject it to much conscious elaboration, but it is in the last resort a sudden inspiration. So will a writer grope vainly for the right word for a long time and suddenly find it, just as a forgotten name will after an interval suddenly present itself complete and certain to the mind which has passed on to attend to other topics. In short an intuition wells up at an

## THE SUB-CONSCIOUS

appropriate stimulus into full consciousness from the sub-conscious part of the mind. Consciousness is not passive in the act of creation, yet we do frequently talk of a thing "occurring to us" which suggests that the activity in the main goes on below the level of consciousness. Consciousness pays attention to the relevant facts, and then suddenly receives an intuition ready-made from the deeper layers of the mind. These deeper layers are variously described by different psychologists, and the terminology is enormously confused. The sub-conscious, the unconscious, the fore-conscious, the co-conscious and other divisions and subdivisions are found in the literature of the subject. The *unconscious* is a term used mainly by Freud with a special restricted meaning, and it will be simpler to form a picture of this part of the mind, which I shall describe merely with the generic term "sub-conscious", from a consideration of what it does rather than from attempting to define what it is.

It is both simpler and more closely related to what we have already found from the nature of intuition, to approach the sub-conscious from the

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side of memory. This is the line taken by Dr. Morton Prince,<sup>1</sup> who regards the sub-conscious as the repository of stored memories. Memory must be understood in a wide sense and include habits, attitudes of mind, feeling even, and many memories (in the narrower sense) of things that were never in the full consciousness but only on the fringe, such as absent minded acts, sub-conscious perceptions (e.g. ticking of a clock which one does not notice unless it stops). It is perhaps too much to say on present evidence that *all* life's experiences are conserved, but an incredible number are and can be fished up by means of a suitable technique (e.g. hypnosis, automatic writing, dreams). Some impressions when they fade out of the centre of attention only go as far as the *fore-conscious*, whence they can be resummoned by voluntary recall—for though we do only pay attention to one thing at a time we obviously do not *forget* all the experiences which are not occupying our immediate attention. But we have an enormous stock of memories that we cannot recall at will, which yet

<sup>1</sup> *The Unconscious*, 1914.

## CONSERVED MEMORIES

influence our lives by persisting in the sub-conscious. How they are conserved is an unanswerable question: Prince finally comes down in favour of a physical brain trace, like the sound traces of a gramophone record, which he calls neurograms. "The Unconscious," he says, "is the great storehouse of neurograms, which are the physiological records of our mental lives." These conserved residues must be regarded as dormant, but susceptible under the right stimulus of becoming active. Something from current experience charges the neurograms with energy. When this happens various mental processes will result, of which the simplest is undoubtedly remembering, and the most miraculous the intuiting of something new which we have already in part described. If the essential act of mind is the making of a comparison, the new truth that is discovered or the new beauty that is created, is the product of an impression entering consciousness, penetrating to the sub-conscious, and finding stored there something resembling itself. The process of noting the resemblance between the new and the old takes place in the

## INSPIRATION

sub-conscious and when complete leaps the gap like an electric spark and the comparison is born in consciousness, a new creation. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* Discoveries and new works of art cannot come into the world without parents any more than babies can. Mental and physical birth are indeed analogous. For the impression from without that penetrates the storehouse of memory, like the union of male and female cells, calls into being something which previously had no independent existence.

In order not to be misled by the metaphor of the storehouse it is well to note a more active property of the sub-conscious while still regarding it as memory. Consider a case of active memory, i.e. reminding.

Neither musicians nor psychologists are less prone than ordinary mortals to leave their razor strops hanging on the bedsteads of seaside hotels. When this happens the sub-conscious frequently gives one not a reminder, for that would be the work of the conscious mind, but a hint that something has been forgotten. A vague uneasiness suffuses the mind after the suit-case is locked

## SUB-CONSCIOUS THOUGHT

up and the room has resumed the grimly impersonal look of the hotel bedroom. "I'm sure I've left something behind" you say. "But no, I've put it all in". It invariably turns out, though, that something (probably not the razor strop, of which one has learned to be especially careful by bitter experience) has been left behind. The sub-conscious is not very efficient in this respect, for it does not usually send up to full consciousness the required recollection until the train has taken you at least a dozen miles on your way.

Akin to this sub-conscious reminding is the even more intellectual process of "unconscious cerebration." "Sleeping on" a problem is the most familiar form of this process. To be obliged to make a sudden decision or to give an answer to a difficult problem on the spot produces a feeling of dissatisfaction amounting almost to pain, while if there is enough time not only to think about it, but to put it out of the mind altogether, one finds when the time comes that one's mind is quite clear on the subject. As Morton Prince says, when you put anything *out*

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of your mind, you are really putting it *into* the mind, and allowing the sub-conscious to revive the appropriate memories and associations which will determine the answer or the decision. Sir Charles Stanford gives a particularly good example of the working of this sub-conscious process in his *Musical Composition* (p. 143).

“ When he (the writer) was fourteen years old he tried to set a somewhat long dramatic poem as a song. He wrote the first three verses easily enough, but when the drama began to become vivid and to require more power of illustration and design than he possessed, he could not progress an inch, and after several miserable attempts he put it away, and forgot all about it. Ten or eleven years later, when he had quite forgotten his early efforts, he opened a book at the same poem, sat down and wrote it straight off without a hitch. But the surprising proof of “unconscious cerebration” came when, fourteen years after the song was written and published, he found the juvenile attempts in an old box, and

## SUB-CONSCIOUS EMOTION

the first three verses were, both in melody and harmony, practically identical with those of the completed song. His brain had remembered what he himself had wholly forgotten, and found the way out of the difficulty for him without his being in the least conscious of the process."

But beside intellectual processes there go on in the sub-conscious many which are mainly affective (emotional) in character. A man's temperament is determined largely by the relative strengths of his instincts, and his character on the amount of harmony he can impose on the complexes which he forms on the basis of these instincts. His emotional life which gives him his scale of values is derived from these two sources—his instincts and his complexes.<sup>1</sup> All these affective elements have their roots in the sub-conscious, and for the sake of clearness it will be well to form a crude picture of the structure of the mind, so that we may be able to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. above, *Essay on Emotion*, p. 67, for a further account of a complex, which may be defined as a system of associated mental elements of which the bond is affective (emotional).

## INSPIRATION

speak of the different levels in the mind without confusion. On the whole the mind may be satisfactorily likened to a stream, for in both there is a continuous forward flow in time and each has the property of depth. Not everything can exist in consciousness at once for the same reason that not every particle of water can be on the surface of a stream at the same time. Accepting the simile, then, the surface consists of the constantly changing objects of our conscious attention; immediately below this exists the fore-conscious which contains all the memory traces of events in our individual lives which have not yet sunk beyond recall. "With the fore-conscious alone conscious daily life is immediately concerned, for it contains the whole of the mental equipment immediately available to consciousness".<sup>2</sup> Included in this mental equipment of the fore-conscious are the complexes which the individual builds on the basis of his instincts. Below this layer lies the unconscious which must be regarded as the basis of the entire mind and the original seat of the great

<sup>2</sup> Tansley, *The New Psychology*, p. 45.

## STRUCTURE OF THE MIND

primitive instincts. The unconscious also contains elements which have been repressed because of their incompatibility with other things in the mind or through being painful in their nature. It is with these repressed elements that Freudian psychology is largely concerned, and it is through the investigation of the working of buried complexes and the conflicts which they set up that most of our knowledge of the sub-conscious mind has been obtained.

The complex is an organization within the mind which has a certain unity of its own and a measure of independence such that under some conditions it may conflict with other complexes and even in the last resort break off from the rest of the mind and become autonomous.

Three degrees of this may be distinguished,

- (1) Conflict.
- (2) Repression.
- (3) Dissociation.

Everyone is familiar with the painfulness of indecision. The pain is due to two characteristics of the mind—its unity and its equilibrium.

## INSPIRATION

By virtue of its characteristic power of intuition the mind must always try to organize into a unified system its whole experience. Anything that wars against unity will be an outrage on the nature of the mind. But in the mind itself are numerous instincts which may compete among themselves for gratification, and the personality has got to say when this one shall be gratified and when that. Furthermore social life has something to say about the regulation of these instincts. So that the mind will be continuously distracted (in the literal sense) unless it can find some way of harmony. This it can do either by making an equilibrium, or by integrating these instinctive impulses and making them subservient to some remoter end. The equilibrium means compensating for the gratification of this impulse by the subsequent gratification of its opponent. Fickleness is usually to be explained in this way. The third act of *La Bohème* shows this trait of the artistic temperament treated in music with fair success by a composer whose general method is pictorial rather than psychological. When alternations of conduct controlled by different

## MENTAL CONFLICT

complexes become too flagrant for the mind to tolerate, it preserves its integrity by two devices. The one is rationalization, which consists in inventing bogus reasons post eventum for conduct the real motive of which is repugnant to the mind. The other is the 'double life' or the erection of logic-tight and emotion-tight barriers in the mind. The good husband and kind father who is also the bad employer and shady business man is an example. Another in which both complexes are sex-complexes is the married man who has a serious illicit love affair. Trouble will only arise in these cases when events prevent an easy alternation and cause the two impulses which both have instinct behind them to confront one another. The classical examples of major conflicts of this kind are those between sex and religion, sex and morality, patriotism and the family, religion and patriotism and so on. Such conflicts have long formed the themes of many dramas and novels and, one may add, of operas. *Samson and Delilah*, in spite of the superficiality of Saint-Saens's music, derives a good deal of strength from the dramatic skill

## INSPIRATION

which portrays the conflict in the mind of Samson of a sex with a religio-patriotic complex. *Aida* turns on a similar conflict. *Tristan and Isolde* is in essence a conflict of sex and morality complexes in the minds of both protagonists. In Rutland Boughton's setting of the same story (*The Queen of Cornwall*) there is a further complication in that Tristram is torn by two sex complexes as well as by the emotions arising from a complicated moral situation. *Tannhauser* is another three-cornered contest between two sex complexes and a religious.

In extreme cases the personality may split in half, and pathological literature shows cases of multiple personality in which the consciousness and conduct of an individual are alternately governed by two sets of complexes. This is called Dissociation and the classical example from fiction is Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The competing personalities are sometimes unaware of one another, but in less extreme cases like that of Fiona Macleod the two personalities in the one man may recognise each other as complementary. The librettist of *The Immortal Hour*

## DUAL PERSONALITY

was a journalist named William Sharp. As a boy he was reserved and kept a good deal of his mental life to himself. As he grew up this dreamy side developed and he became a poet. He felt the poetic side of him to be feminine in sensitiveness and general quality, and he therefore assumed the name of Fiona Macleod for the author of his poetical works, keeping William Sharp for his critical journalism. Ultimately the two personalities became so distinct that on birthdays and similar occasions he used to write letters to himself in which "Yours sincerely, Will" addressed "Dear Fiona," and vice-versa.

Many people who see *The Immortal Hour* become vaguely aware of a double streak running through it which here and there produces a sense of incongruity. It is probably Mr. Boughton's most successful work, because he has succeeded in catching the mysterious elusive atmosphere of the poem, but here and there a certain grittiness becomes apparent, as when the old men sing the jaunty tune of 'But that was in the old, old days'. This piece of cheerful masculine crudity cannot be entirely assimilated to the delicate feminine

gossamer of the rest of the piece. This reflection in the music is a tribute to Mr. Boughton's faithfulness to his text, but it also reveals a similar double strand in Mr. Boughton himself which is so instructive that it will be considered again later.<sup>1</sup>

Most cases of Dissociation are not so harmless as that of William Sharp but belong to the most extreme form of insanity. Less serious than this but far more drastic than mere conflict is repression. This way of seeking harmony between warring complexes may have graver results in nervous breakdowns, but it is the therapeutic investigation of these cases which has shed so much light on the nature of the subconscious mind. It has given rise to the valuable hypothesis of mental energy and it has called attention to the mind's power of making symbols. Both of these conceptions throw a little light on the mysterious faculty which we helplessly term "creative gifts".

The normal working of the psychic energy has already been described,<sup>2</sup> and that art has been produced by diverting into non-biological chan-

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> See *Applause*, p. 152 sq.

## SUBLIMATION

nels energy which is derived from the instincts is no longer questioned. An enormous quantity of the world's art bears on the face of it the marks of its origin in the instinct of sex, and where it is not the direct sublimation of sexual energy, its power is still derived from instinctive sources. All scientific search for truth is pursued by means of energy derived from the instinct of curiosity, which in its turn is held by many thinkers to originate in the sexual instinct. What psychopathology has confirmed is that psychic energy like its physical counterpart cannot be destroyed. Any complex that is repressed impairs the efficiency of the mind by continuing to discharge its energy in a direction contrary to the main trend of the rest of the mind. If the complex is not very potent or if the repressed element be merely a surplus of instinctive energy no serious damage will be done either to the integrity or to the efficiency of the mind, but the energy will contrive to discharge itself in indirect ways, of which dreams are the most important.

Dreams have played a very important part in recent psychology. Regarded as of tremendous

## INSPIRATION

importance by unsophisticated people, they are among the first superstitions discredited and discarded by minds which are beginning to think scientifically. Freud however has applied scientific method to night-dreams and day-dreams (which are kindred activities as their name rightly implies) and not only accounted for their production, interpreted their meaning and explained their relation to the rest of the mind, but used them as a scientific instrument for shedding light on the dark places of the sub-conscious. In common with popular speech which identifies poets and dreamers his theory of dreams claims to throw light on the nature of art. Art is however a very complex phenomenon with more in it than dreaming, and Freud's over simplifications are sometimes less satisfactory than the mysteries they are intended to elucidate. Notwithstanding, there is the dream-like element in art, and there are one or two composers who illustrate very plainly some of Freud's contentions.

The theory is this: the most fundamental part of the mind is that which aims at the survival of the individual, the egoistic impulses, that is,

## PLEASURE VERSUS REALITY

which enable the infant to suck, to seek warmth and the well-being of every sort under the guidance of pleasure and pain. Freud calls this part of the mind's activity "the pleasure principle". Equally necessary to survival, however, and biologically almost as primary, is the "reality principle" by virtue of which the organism learns to make the necessary adjustments of its life and modifications of its own desires which are required by the superior forces of nature and of social life. In the development of life these two principles will obviously conflict with each other fairly often. As a result of these conflicts many of the strong egoistic impulses will be repressed into the unconscious, with the result that in general a man's sub-conscious life tends to *compensate* for the characteristics of his conscious life. The dream is a devious channel by which the repressed impulses can discharge their energy into the stream of consciousness. The repressing forces Freud has conceived as a censorship which can only be eluded if the dream material disguises itself in forms which will not be repugnant to consciousness. This it does by

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means of *symbolism*. Many dreams, including those delicious day-dreams in which the dreamer can cast aside the damping images of reality and range freely through a world in which he cuts a heroic figure, are therefore the expression in a disguised form of unrealized wishes and derived from impulses which have not been able to obtain conscious satisfaction owing to circumstances or to their incompatibility with the other thoughts and impulses which have predominated in the mind.

The two points *compensation* and *symbolism* are relevant to artistic experience. The general point that art is in some sort an escape from reality has been held not only by Freud but also by Schopenhauer; it must be admitted as an element of the pleasure that we all derive from the contemplation of any flight of the imagination. At a tragedy we escape from the pettiness of our own lives into the bigness of someone else's: for music it is as often claimed that it transports the listener to a sphere remote from ordinary experience as that it is an interpretation of life. Just as the most miserable lunatics compensate for the wretchedness of their real condition by

## COMPENSATION

assigning royal rank to themselves, so do healthy boys and sane kitchen-maids bring to their souls the balm of feeling their ego-complexes (or “self-regarding sentiments”) expanding as never in real life by reading stories of great heroes and resplendent duchesses. In day dreaming or in games of make-belief they project themselves into the glorious situation; in reading, the mind is in a more receptive, less active state but the imagination receives the same kind of satisfaction. In the primitive artist, the minstrel, the same principle is clearly seen at work; from boasting to story-telling is a short step, and out of story-telling come music and all manner of poetry by direct succession.

And Iago, the great boaster,  
He the marvellous story-teller,  
Saw in all the eyes around him,  
Saw in all their looks and gestures,  
That the wedding guests assembled  
Longed to hear his pleasant stories,  
His immeasurable falsehoods.

Very boastful was Iago:  
Never heard he an adventure  
But himself had made a greater;  
Never any deed of daring  
But himself had done a bolder;  
Never any marvellous story  
But himself could tell a stranger. \*

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Artist and audience alike, then, seek in art the expansion of what in life is contracted by the reality principle. Art is a beautiful day-dream.

As a theory of art, "compensation" so propounded by the Freudian school does not adequately cover the ground, and falls into the evolutionary fallacy of reducing what is to what was. Art is not so simple as this. The theory is true exactly in so far as art is an entertainment and no further. Compensatory fantasy provides excellent entertainment. The more a novel or film or play 'compensates', the better the entertainment and, as a rule, the worse the art.<sup>1</sup> The kitchen-maid's penny novelette is rarely a great literary masterpiece, the drawing-room ballad rarely a good song. In fact, this explanation by origins goes to pieces on the crucial question of quality. It is not, however, to be wholly discarded. Art is a form of entertainment in that it is an outcome of the same play impulse and that it still has the characteristic of "taking a man out of himself", but it has long got past the "tired business man" standard of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Taste*, p. 227.

## FRANCK, HOLST AND BROUGHTON

values—that curious artistic canon which demands that cinemas, novels, theatres and music shall be made specially inane in order that stalls and “gods” shall run no risk of overstrain from making an effort of artistic appreciation. The principle of compensation, however, does play a part in artistic inspiration. It may be seen clearly in the music of Holst and Boughton and to some extent in César Franck, though many composers show no very clear trace of it; indeed the giants Bach,<sup>1</sup> Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, would seem to have succeeded in expressing their complete personalities in their music. Their many-sidedness is indeed one of their most notable characteristics. The three composers mentioned, however, have written music which supplements some of their characteristic attributes in quite a striking way.

Mr. Holst is a hardworking and practical musician, who at Morley College has done work which no fantastic visionary could have accom-

<sup>1</sup> Dr. W. G. Whittaker quotes an interesting example of this compensation from Bach's 'Magnificat' where the pulling down of the mighty obviously gives a good deal of pleasure to a composer who was obliged to be constantly soliciting for patronage. See *Fugitive Notes on Some Cantatas and the Motets, of J. S. Bach*, p. 73.

## INSPIRATION

plished in winning the confidence of the working men and women and overcoming all manner of practical difficulties of organization and the like; nor is he conspicuous for savagery of tongue or demeanour, but is indeed less ferocious than many of his brother conductors. Yet he is the composer of the most terrifying piece of music ever written, and regularly seeks his inspiration from Oriental poetry and other more or less exotic ideas. Similarly, though in a less degree, César Franck, with his saintly countenance and quiet life, balances his religious faith by a delight in portraying the diabolical in his music. Mr. Rutland Boughton is an even more striking example of a composer who compensates for the definiteness of his conscious ideas with an extreme vagueness in his music. He has decided views not merely on music but on political and social questions; he has shown powers of initiation and organization in his work at Glastonbury; as a conductor he is a veritable dynamo. Much of his music, including *The Immortal Hour* which is his best work, shows precisely the opposite qualities; nothing is sharp, all the edges are

## MAN AND ARTIST

blurred in a world suffused with the most opaque Celtic twilight in which initiative and organization would be obscene forces, and in which energy would shatter its unsubstantial gossamer and shadow. The beautiful feminine qualities that are found frequently in Brahms—grace, tenderness and the like—seem at first sight to be out of keeping with the obvious virility both of his gruff exterior and of the main tenor of his vigorous mind. And so one can go on finding traces of this compensating principle scattered up and down the history of all the arts. It accounts for the fact often noticed that artists when one meets them in the flesh seem very different from the personalities one has come to know from their works. It explains many of the small mysteries, why for example composers often admire most the least characteristic of their works and think lightly of what they can do best, or turn from a style of which they are masters to various uncouth forms of expression.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the decent obscurity of a footnote I might mention the names of Dr. Vaughan Williams, Mr. Arnold Bax and Mr. Herbert Howells. I don't wish to push this explanation to the exclusion of other factors, such as a desire to experiment or the normal course of development into a second or third 'period', but a good deal of the perversity of modern writers must be explained on some such basis.

## INSPIRATION

Of symbolism, which in the theory of dreams at first takes a deal of swallowing, it must be said that the more one thinks about it the more plausible it becomes and the more clearly it agrees with artistic experience. Poetic thinking we have already seen to consist of seeing unsuspected resemblances; symbolism means at bottom the substitution for a thing of something else like it, something that conveys its essential meaning in another shape. To express any vital idea the mind is always driven to embody it in symbolic forms. Primitive peoples substitute a symbol for the concrete reality so easily that they fail to distinguish the one from the other, and build up great systems of sympathetic magic in order to regulate the weather and the other forces which mould human life by bringing pressure on their symbols.<sup>1</sup> Nor has the modern civilized man entirely freed himself from the same way of thinking, although he has a more scientific notion of cause and effect. As the savage thinks of his totem so a hard-headed Englishman thinks of the Union Jack. The

<sup>1</sup> See Frazer *The Golden Bough* passim.

## SYMBOLS

sign of the cross still has power over the imagination; the policeman's uniform, the clerical collar, the schoolmaster's cap and gown, the barrister's wig, are modern symbols embodying an idea; so is all ritual and ceremonial. The value of the symbol is that it enables everyone, peasant and philosopher alike, to grasp the significance of a universal idea embodied in a particular expression of it. Art is one way of so expressing a universal idea, and universality is one canon of the greatness of art (not, of course, the only one), which can be applied even to so particular a work as a landscape painting.

It must not be supposed however that every symbol expresses a universal idea, though perhaps that is its highest function. But it always enriches the meaning of the thing symbolized, even when it is only a case of simple substitution as in an ordinary metaphor. The principle can be seen at work most clearly in literature and drama, where the tendency of language to enrich itself with similes, metaphors and all manner of symbolical expressions has full play. Here is Wordsworth employing this mechanism of the

## INSPIRATION

mind consciously and in a quite simple form, as he contemplates a daisy:

A nun demure of lowly port;  
Or sprightly maiden of Love's court,  
In thy simplicity the sport  
Of all temptations.

A queen in crown of rubies drest;  
A starveling in a scanty vest  
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,  
Thy appellations.

A little Cyclops with one eye  
Staring to threaten and defy,  
That thought comes next—and instantly  
The freak is over.

The shape will vanish, and behold !  
A silver shield with boss of gold  
That spreads itself, some faery bold  
In fight to cover.

More significant than the making of similes like this, however, is the inability of the poet to avoid metaphor and pictorial suggestion, and the extraordinary ease with which these metaphors once made are taken up into ordinary colloquial speech. Here is a more spontaneous use of metaphors.

This is a sacred city built of marvellous earth,  
Life was lived nobly here to give such beauty birth;

## METAPHOR

Beauty was in this brain and in this eager hand  
Death is so blind and numb, Death does not understand.  
Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limb's  
glory.

Death makes justice a dream and strength a traveller's story;  
Death drives the lonely soul to wander under the sky,  
Death opens unknown doors—it is most grand to die.

John Masefield. *By a Bier-side.*

Of the nine metaphors in these eight lines one—"giving birth"—has almost ceased to be a metaphor; another, the word "drifts", is a pictorial word pushed to the extremity of its meaning; and between these two extremes there is every grade of metaphoricalness. This poem recalls the marvellous passage of Ecclesiastes beginning "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy Youth", a piece of spontaneous symbolism which for beauty and power of expression cannot be surpassed.

If language and the arts which depend on language as their medium show this tendency to work by the method of symbolism, music, another kind of language, does the same, but by a more devious route. In literature the process is a simple one of substituting one idea or image

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. xii. 1-7.

## INSPIRATION

for another, in music all ideas and visual images have to be transmuted into audile images; but few will deny that musical imagery embodies ideas, especially universal ideas, or that it is an expression in sound, i.e. an audible symbol, of an inner mental state. Those who are most severe on programme music will admit that it has powers of pictorial suggestion, but will deny its power of symbolising a concrete image. In reality, however, the musician is very little worse off than the poet in getting his symbols understood. The poet uses his words in a new sense and we follow his meaning and often modify the meaning of the word to suit its new sense. Wagner has to reiterate his symbolism a number of times before his leit-motifs become as intelligible to the listener as the poet's metaphor, but once that is achieved they are as expressive as a great number of metaphors, and the wonder really is not that music's power of symbolising concrete images is so limited but that it is so great. The universal power of making symbols implies a universal power of understanding symbols, which is probably the root cause of the

## MUSICAL IMAGES AND SYMBOLS

persistence of the programme type of music in spite of all that is said against it. Every man makes his own symbols in his dreams. For Freud most of the images in dreams are sexual symbols, and he has found that much of such dream symbolism is universal; but he also states that "the dreamer, owing to a peculiar set of recollections, may create for himself the right to use anything whatever as a sexual symbol, though it is not ordinarily used in that way".<sup>1</sup> Art has not so limited a content as dreams have according to Freud's theory, but the musician's power of making a musical phrase serve him to express what particular meaning he likes seems to be the same sort of mental operation. Think, for example, of the number of instances of musical material used by Bach to express one set of ideas in one set of circumstances and something quite different in another. And when the composer has expressed his meaning in his chosen phrase his audience finds little difficulty in following him.

It is better undoubtedly to have a clue to the concrete imagery which Strauss often depicts

<sup>1</sup> *Interpretation of Dreams* c.v. p. 246. 3rd ed. Trans. by Brill.

## INSPIRATION

in musical symbols, but even in the absence of definite knowledge the listener is able by his own symbolising powers to make out a good deal of what is going on in a symphonic poem and to get pleasure from it.

And now how much from this cloud of words has emerged as to the nature of musical inspiration? We may summarize thus: An inspired work of art is the expression of its creator's personality, of which a part exists beneath the level of consciousness; this sub-conscious part of the mind is the storehouse of his experience and is charged with the energy that drives him to artistic composition. An appropriate stimulus enters his consciousness and penetrates to the deeper levels of the mind, where it finds memories, associations and analogies. An act of comparison takes place and causes to burst up into full consciousness a new intuition, which represents the reaction of his whole personality to the new experience. In the 'whole personality' a number of forces may be distinguished: on the emotional side the relative strengths of his native instincts, the organization of the complexes

## ARTISTIC CREATION

through which the instinctive energy finds an outlet, and the sub-conscious flow of feeling which may contain "compensating" tendencies of opposite quality to the main trend of his character; on the intellectual side his native ability, his education, the sum total of his experience, including many memories that have sunk beyond voluntary recall but which are none the less conserved and available under certain conditions (cf. Sir Charles Stanford's experience). The new intuition, as I have argued in Essay III, is an amalgam of intellectual and emotional elements which for purposes of expression takes the form of a judgement of value. The intellectual side of the intuition is the active power of symbolising, i.e. of substituting richer conceptions for simple ones, but it takes place below the threshold of consciousness. Fully conscious processes are the elaboration of the intuition to prepare it for effective communication, and the acquiring and direction of technique for the same purpose. Thus to produce a single work of art all the parts of the mind, conscious and subconscious, intellectual and emotional, interact and co-operate.



## VII

### TASTE

*De gustibus non disputandum*, it has been said, and yet we all constantly make judgements of taste and are quite emphatic about them. There is no gainsaying that the whole subject of taste bristles with difficulties so soon as it is examined beyond the point of making a simple judgement of quality. The first to arise is the wide divergence of view—amounting sometimes to flat contradiction—which is found in pronouncements of equally eminent critics or of equally sensitive laymen on the same work of art. So great is the difficulty of finding anything like an objective standard, that most people quickly reach as the conclusion of an argument involving aesthetic judgements, the very unsatisfactory proposition ‘that it is entirely a matter of taste.’ The unsatisfactoriness of such a conclusion lies not merely in the fact that it has taken us precisely

nowhere, but that it implies that no standard is possible, when all artists and sensitive persons know positively that there is a standard of some kind, which quite definitely marks off good from bad. But what is the nature of the standard? The best way of snaring this elusive bird would seem to be with the nets of analogy, of which we have two most convenient to our hand in morals and language. By means of the one we can discern the general nature of the standard, and with the other we can apply it to the difficult art of music with a reasonable degree of confidence that we are not voicing our prejudices but making valid judgements of quality.

Now at a cinema no one, however stupid, insensitive, or perverse, ever fails to recognise the villain of the piece or manages to confuse him with the hero. In real life such recognition is more uncertain, but only because there are more confusing and concealing factors in the situation which make it difficult to get at the facts, not because it is more difficult to judge the facts when they are revealed. We have, in truth, a native faculty for making judgements of quality,

## JUDGEMENT IN PERCEPTION

by virtue of which we pronounce an act of heroism to be a noble act. If anyone fails to see its nobility we cannot prove its goodness to him. The judgement lies in the perception, as Aristotle said, and is not susceptible of proof. By this same faculty we can make judgements of value other than moral judgements strictly so called; we recognise that the football we are watching is good football, the jam we are eating is good jam, and the music we are hearing is good music. So far our standard is subjective; it is the power of a reasonably sensitive mind to recognise a quality. But it is a judgement, not a feeling. We do not perceive that two and two make five for the quite good reason that two and two do not in fact make five; our feelings would often prompt us to recognise that two and two did make five, as for instance when counting the Treasury Notes in our purse, if the faculty of judgement was entirely a subjective affair. The upshot of this elementary philosophy is that the problem of taste is one form of the problem of knowledge, and without plunging into any metaphysical questions about the relation of the

## TASTE

knower to the thing known, we can observe that in pronouncing a royalty ballad to be bad music, we imply both a capacity of judgement in our minds and the objective existence of certain qualities in the music. It is the latter which cause all the difficulties in ordinary life. Those who perceive the bad qualities do not need to go further into the matter; it is bad music and the badness is obvious. But those to whom the badness is not obvious reply, 'Why is *Until* a bad song? I don't see it; I like it, and I think it is a very pretty song.' A reasoned answer is called for in such cases, because though ultimately taste can be formed only by exercising judgements and making ourselves increasingly sensitive, the process can be greatly helped on by pointing out a few tests which most people are able to make in other departments of life. The analogy of language provides quite a number of these tests, and it is on the whole safe to come at a judgement of a song by way of the words. And inasmuch as the music of a song is, as a general rule, a more or less faithful counterpart to its words, the song offers the easiest approach to the analysis of

## SINCERITY

what constitutes the goodness and the badness of music of all kinds.

The first of these tests is sincerity: in the first instance the ordinary sincerity of utterance that we recognize in conversation. The juxtaposition of the following two poems illustrates this, the least subtle form of insincerity:

Because you speak to me in accents sweet  
I find the roses waking round my feet,  
And I am led through tears and joy to thee  
Because you speak to me.

Since thou, O fondest and truest,  
Hast loved me best and longest,  
And now with trust the strongest  
The joy of my heart renewest.

• • • •  
The good I have ne'er repaid thee  
In heav'n I pray be recorded,  
And all thy love be rewarded  
By God, thy Master that made thee.

Insincerity also appears in songs in another form, in which the expression is inappropriate to the emotion to be expressed. It is recognizable that all vocal utterance expresses emotion of some kind and in some degree. A request to pass the salt or a simple statement to the effect that it is

## TASTE

raining, or was cold yesterday, reflects the speaker's attitude towards the facts about which he is speaking. But some modes of expression—e.g. poetry—are more fit to be used for the discharge of a deep or of an intense emotion than for the communication of some fact of small interest for which colloquial prose would be appropriate. Mr. Holst has said that a musician expresses in sound the emotions which all men feel. When an ordinary man has to express something for which ordinary speech is inappropriate he generally falls back on a gift or a swift glance, a handshake or something of that sort. Artists have other means of expressing what they feel, but they do not employ these means to express the ordinary emotions of low intensity. A singer who, when buying a couple of mutton-chops addressed her butcher in *aria parlante*, would rightly be regarded as ridiculous. Mutton-chop emotion is experienced by all men, but it is not one that is appropriate to musical expression even by the most deeply-feeling composer. It is insincerity of this kind which brings God into the last verse of most royalty ballads. The

## SUPERFICIALITY

F. E. Weatherleys of the poetry trade try to weight a shallow emotion on a trivial theme by drawing on the profound emotions with which the name of God is charged in the human heart. This leads to two astonishing results: one is that the mention of God, Whose chief characteristic is goodness, is the best rough test in existence for the badness of a song; and the other is that most songs of the semi-sacred type are in reality little essays in blasphemy. The misuse of roses and the dawn are other examples of the same form of insincerity. Well has Mr. Plunket Greene said that the royalty ballad has made the English rose to stink in our nostrils.

It may be argued that in any particular case of words or music of this kind the expression is perfectly sincere, though the quality of the emotion is poor. This is certainly true of some quite bad songs, in which case the badness is due to one or all of these qualities:

- (1) Shallowness;
- (2) Self-deception of the real nature of the emotion;
- (3) Sentimentality.

## TASTE

Many love-songs are bad because of their cheap superficial emotion. Since love is not a shallow topic, these must be assigned to the category of the insincerity of the indirect kind. But often we find shallowness of feeling that is quite sincere, which owes its shallowness to a certain triviality of theme or treatment. Compare the wrong way of doing this:

There's an old-fashioned house in an old-fashioned street,  
In a quaint little old-fashioned town.  
There's a street where the cobblestones harass the feet  
As it struggles up hill and then down.

I love every mouse in that old-fashioned house  
In the street that runs up hill and down,  
Each stone and each stick, every cobble and brick  
In that quaint little old-fashioned town.

with the right:

Just now the lilac is in bloom  
All before my little room,  
And in my flower-beds I think  
Smile the carnation and the pink.

*Eiθε γενοίμην*—would that I were  
In Grantchester, in Grantchester.

Sentimentality is a species of self-deception, and will make clear the nature of the wider genus. Sentimentality may most conveniently

## SENTIMENTALITY

and concisely be defined as self-conscious emotion, and may be seen most clearly in a love-song where ostensibly the man's emotion is love for his beloved. A closer scrutiny, however, reveals that he is entirely preoccupied with himself. Thus the sentimental song says:

Two sad grey eyes so tired and desolate,  
I'd give the world if it could be *my* fate  
To dry the tears that blind your eyes,  
(N.B.) *And make their coldness glow with love for me.*  
For you *my* whole soul cries,  
It *breaks my heart* to see your dear grey eyes so sad.

The true love-song, on the other hand, says:

*Thou art my life, thou art my soul,*  
*Naught can like thee such joy impart.*

And even in the naïve *Waly, Waly*, where the lover is quite frankly telling of his feelings, there is no egotism masquerading as love for another:

A ship there is, and she sails the sea,  
She's loaded deep as deep can be,  
But not so deep as the love I'm in,  
I know not if I sink or swim.

Sentimentality is the exact psychological parallel of physical sensuality. The appetite of hunger is directed towards an end, namely, the maintenance of life: eating is accompanied by

pleasure. When one eats for the pleasure of eating, and not for the satisfaction of the appetite, he is a sensualist. So when one exercises his emotions for the pleasure of the emotion, and not towards its legitimate end, he is a sentimentalist. If one is more in love with the pleasurable state of being in love than with his beloved, he is a sentimentalist. And songs which say, in effect:

No song in all the world until you spoke,  
No hope until you gave your heart to me . . .

are sentimental in the worst possible sense of the word, and are examples of what is known in recent psychological language as compensatory phantasy. The enormous popularity of many works of art which are ultimately seen to be bad is due to the fact that the suppressed wishes and rationalisations which clothe themselves, all unknown to the artist, in some of his most high-sounding and beautiful expressions, find an echo in the hearts of the hearers. We all like to deceive ourselves, and we can slip into sentimentality before we know it, just because the subconscious part of the mind can play these tricks. Works of art inspired by the war offer many

## RATIONALIZATION

examples of what are superficially beautiful, but which, when viewed more closely, are seen to be the expressions of suppressed wishes and rationalisations of unacknowledged emotions. In the garb of righteous indignation, heroism, or sacrifice, appeared the emotions of hatred, 'positive self-feeling' of an aggressive kind, crude herd feeling, and 'pooled self-esteem' (a happy term of Mr. Clutton Brock's), until the crowning example of such art-works appeared, in which the woman who said 'Patriotism is not enough,' is commemorated with a statue inscribed with the words 'For God, King, and Country.' Musical examples of this kind of self-deception are common enough in the work of Victorian composers, and the present slump in Victorian musical stock has been largely brought about by the exposure of the deceit.

A similar psychological test for quality in music was described by Sir Hubert Parry before most people had heard of Freud, but which has received some confirmation from those parts of Freudian theory which are not really disputable. Parry said that a great deal of music—and he was

## TASTE

speaking here of instrumental music—was bad, because in it men could abandon all restraint without realising what they were doing. In music one could swear with complete abandon and never utter a bad word, so that one did not know he was swearing, and consequently need suffer no pangs of conscience about it. Sankey hymns and some ragtime offer examples of this form of musical (and moral) viciousness, being, as they are, disguised manifestations of crude ego and sex.<sup>1</sup> Respectable drawing-rooms listen with intense pleasure to the quite extraordinary outpourings of amateur vocalists (especially light baritones), because they are putting off all ordinary restraints for the time being, and are not ashamed of doing so, because they are not even aware that

<sup>1</sup> Crude, i.e. unsublimated. Sublimation is a process by which the energy attached to any particular instinct finds a discharge in some activity other than its natural conation. Some amount of sublimation of all the instincts is not merely desirable but essential because when more than one instinct or complex is aroused at once, it is not possible for all to find an outlet. Some instincts inhibit others—fear, for example, will stop pugnacity or lust or laughter; some complexes may lead to contradictory actions. When there is a conflict one instinct or complex will be suppressed, and an outlet for its energy becomes necessary for mental health. The ego-complex is a valuable, indeed the most valuable, part of a man's life, for it is the core of personality, and no man is healthy who cannot gratify and express his egotism. But for a man to vaunt himself under cover of praising God is a form of self-deceit which will ultimately ruin the whole character, and though the sex-instinct is strong enough in the main to look after itself, its direct titillation is generally regarded in the same way as is playing with fire.

## THE *CLICHE*

they are doing so. Stanford, in his *Musical Composition*, says that music in itself is incapable of any moral qualities, and is incapable of being obscene or morally offensive, though it can magnify those qualities a thousandfold if it is united with words or gestures which have these qualities. Parry's doctrine, however, goes further, and says that in music men can abandon moral restraint and give rein to emotions which they would curb if they were aware of their nature.

The last of the tests for a bad song to be mentioned is one of the easiest to apply, and the one by which we can cross from the literary method we have been using to one that is purely musical: it is the use of the *cliché*. It is not that an expression is intrinsically bad in any respect. It is impossible to condemn either of the words 'sacred' or 'edifice'; it is even more impossible to say that an E sharp or a diminished seventh is insincere or artistically bad. But to employ a stereotyped formula borrowed at twentieth-hand to convey a vicarious emotion is one of the worst forms of artistic dishonesty. In any good art

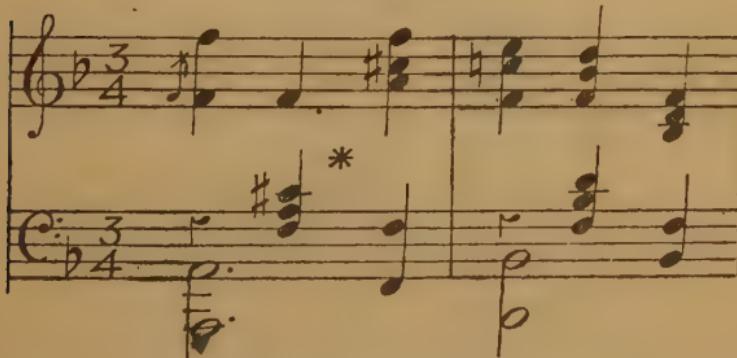
## TASTE

what is expressed, if it is to be of any value, must be the experience of the individual, his reaction to the great facts of universal experience. To give intelligible expression to such an experience involves the use of terms (whether words or tones) which are common property, but to use a ready-made phrase to convey something individual and peculiar is a form of insincerity which cheapens the very thing it is trying to exalt, and shows either superficiality or incompetence or a defective sense of what is fitting in the artist who uses it and the audience which is imposed on by it. The ballads are full of verbal *clichés*—‘divine’ as the epithet of love is perhaps the commonest—and the problem for the layman is to discover their harmonic counterparts. Fortunately the shop-ballad has usually a flavour so strongly marked that no knowledge of harmony is required to detect its real quality after a couple of bars or so. If, however, the listener wishes to isolate these harmonic clichés and see what they are he will find it more difficult than the detection of verbal clichés because no chord, however overworked, may be deemed a cliché, as

## HARMONIC 'GINGER'

a single word or phrase can in the sister art. It is progressions not chords that make bad harmony and it depends on the context whether a pungent chord like an augmented fifth is in place or not. If, as in the following example, it has been thrown in to add ginger to an otherwise straightforward passage it is merely a piece of strong language that does not correspond to any genuine feeling in the writer's mind, it has the hollow ring of the cliché, fine-sounding to the undiscriminating, nauseating to those who have heard it before.

### Example 1



The same chord as used by Puccini in the first act of *Madame Butterfly* is just as pungent, too strong perhaps for a delicate ear, but it fulfils

## TASTE

a definite purpose in pushing the modulations forward and emphasising the pictorial significance of the key-changes—the opening out of the view

### Example 2

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in G major (indicated by a G clef) and the bottom staff is in C major (indicated by a C clef). Both staves begin in G major. The top staff has a key signature of one sharp, while the bottom staff has no sharps or flats. The music consists of eighth and sixteenth note patterns. The top staff has a melodic line with a bracket above it. The bottom staff has a harmonic line with a bass clef. The music transitions through various keys, including G major, A major, B major, and C major, illustrating the "key-changes" mentioned in the text.

from the hill and the vivid colours of sea and sky. Sincerity and appropriateness are qualities therefore which "will out" even in the highly technical

workmanship of harmony, and they may be detected by the layman as in other spheres of life. The listener without technical knowledge appreciates, when he is shown, the balance of the too much and the too little which we call good taste. He will not deny that so much honey to so little bread is a sickly dainty in the notorious passage shown in Example 2, and he sees that Example 3 is a little thin for the diet of a grown man.

Many of these tunes, though poor in themselves (but usually very vocal), can be cleaned up a bit by harmonizing them with plain 5-3s and 6-3s. Nothing, however, can be done for the E sharp in the tune of *Two Eyes of Grey*, which must have some deeply mysterious reason for its complete beastliness which Freud alone knows. Abuses of rhythm do not so readily show themselves to the lay ear, though *agitato* triplets and the more vulgar figures of syncopation may be cited. A most convincing example of faulty structure ruining a tune, is *Tipperary*, which by its associations as well as by its intrinsic merits might have been expected to survive, and was none the less

## TASTE

## EXAMPLE 3

Two eyes of grey, that used to be so bright;

What is the shadow veiling all your light?

N.B. The middle of the three staves represents the essential harmony, for as will be observed, except in a few places there is no real bass, and in the published version of the song the right hand of the pianoforte part also redoubles the tune. This third statement of the

# BALDNESS

The musical score consists of two staves of music. The left staff is in G major (two sharps) and the right staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). The music is in common time. The lyrics are as follows:

Why do the tears o.....  
 ...sweep the place. Of just the sweetest  
 light I e...ver saw  
 in any woman's face

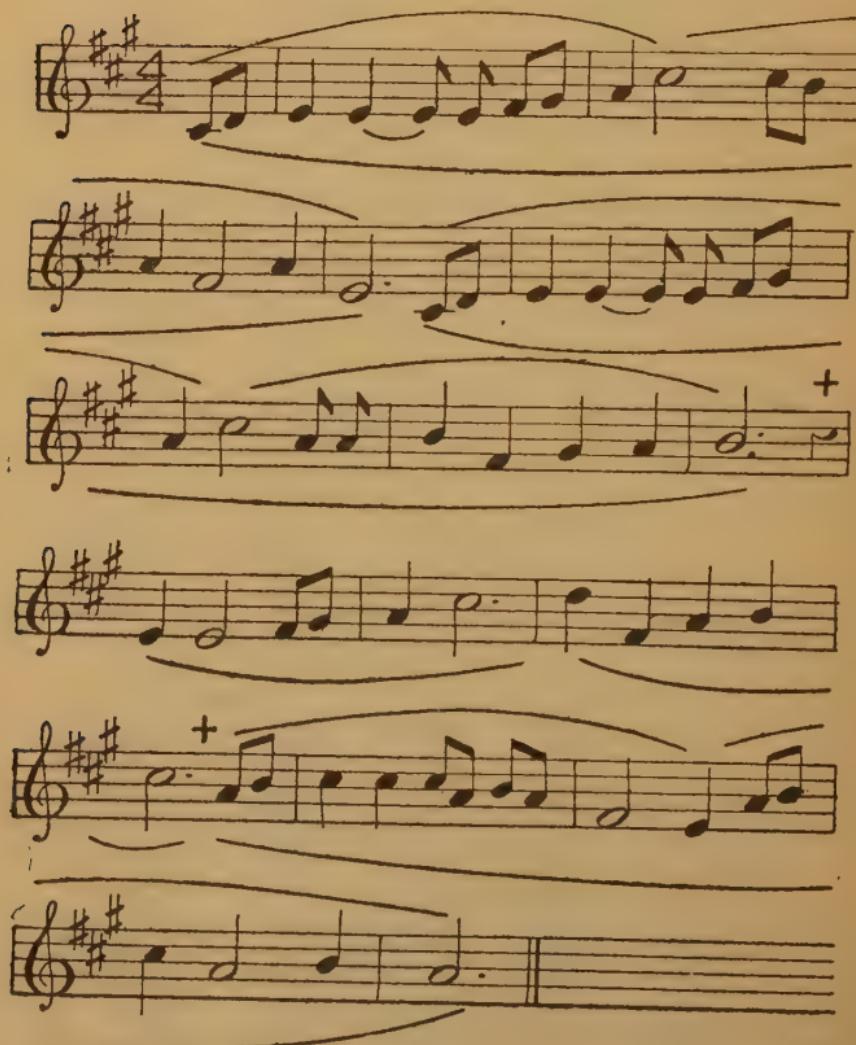
Accompaniment: The left hand provides harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. The right hand plays eighth-note patterns. The bass line is prominent, particularly in the right staff.

melody I have eliminated here in order not to obscure the harmonic riches which lie beneath it. If one takes away the doubling of the tune in the tenor octave as well the bountiful of the feast becomes even more apparent.

## TASTE

consigned without pity to the limbo of the out-of-date, not by highbrow musicians but by the man

### Example 4



## DISCRIMINATION AND CATHOLICITY

in the street innocent of all musical knowledge. The plain man doesn't know that he has so highly developed a sense of form which he exercises by the light of nature, and he is always interested to find out that he turned it down for the weakness of the third phrase with its absence of climax and vain return for a third time to the C sharp which was its old high-water mark.

By the canons he has obtained from some such examination of morals and language the ordinary man can begin to judge music of all kinds, for sincerity, depth of feeling, appropriateness of treatment are qualities of all art, and the detection of *clichés* which are more easily recognizable than the vaguer qualities for which we ultimately have to look, offers an easy introduction to the development of the faculty of criticism and the cultivation of taste. One pitfall, however, has to be avoided: not to lose in the exquisiteness of our taste the equally important quality of catholicity, and so make the mistake of condemning as bad art something in a style which the critic dislikes. But Style is another question, and a big one—almost as big as Taste.



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